

ISSUE Nº 9
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DIABOLIQUE™

THE
DEVIL
INSIDE
AND THE ADVENT OF
FOUND FOOTAGE HORRORS

MONDO PAGAN
Häxan & the Witchcraft
Documentary Phenomena

The Craft of Director
DON SHARP

The Strange Writer & Occultist
MONTAGUE SUMMERS

DAVID
DEL VALLE'S
Unpublished
Interview with
BURN, WITCH BURN
Director
SIDNEY HAYERS

A TRIBUTE TO
KEN RUSSELL AND
THE DEVILS





DIABOLIQUE

Issue N° 9 Mar/Apr, 2012

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Horror for the Connoisseurs

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Salutations readers!

SO, I HAVE to ask—how are we doing? Are we getting things right? You wouldn't believe how often this has come up in conversation lately. 9 issues in, and we're still finding our feet—tinkering with the format, adding new things, taking some away, refining styles... And then we'll get a single email which makes some point that sets us all on edge, and there's a danger that that one comment on its own might send us in completely the wrong direction. You see, we need your feedback, and greatly appreciate it. Whether we're doing something right or wrong, or something you'd like us to cover. Don't be afraid, do write in, email, post on Facebook or write us a letter!

We'll be bringing back the letters page next issue, so please get your comments coming in now!

I've been in London for a few days this week on work and, taking a jaunt over to the Cinema Store on Upper St Martin's Lane, got my first glimpse of *Diabolique* on an actual store shelf! Oh the shiver of pride I felt seeing the mag alongside so many of the other longer-established zines. Its one thing receiving the mag in the post, quite another to see it retailing.

• • •

This issue delves into the wicked world of witchcraft, an exhaustive subject that remains one of the vertebrae on the backbone of horror. Whether you believe in gods and monsters is irrelevant, witches existed and exist, and the fear that surrounded them was tangible too. And tangible fear has a habit of sticking around from generation to generation.

We've only scraped the surface here, and as we put the issue to bed I realise there is so much more I want to cover, so don't be surprised if we go down this path again in the near future.

Perhaps the biggest shame this month is the fact that the BFI are releas-

ing Ken Russell's masterpiece *The Devils* on DVD just a few months after his untimely death. For years this has proved something of an impossible-to-find item I gather. It was one of the first horror videos I consciously bought back in the mid 1990s, and I was blown away from the off. Years later I watched the documentary on the film and the infamous "Rape of Christ" sequence on Channel 4 while my rather more conservative parents sat behind me on the sofa. Oh it was awkward—but Ken's film isn't disrespectful of Christianity or the Church at all. He presents very real people in situations drawn from life. And then there is Oliver Reed, in undoubtedly his finest ever performance—oozing talent and sex appeal and charisma and presence.

I never got to meet Oliver Reed, but I did meet Ken and his wife Lisi, just the once. I got him to sign a couple of my Ken Russell authored film books, but sadly not Mike and Gabby's *Space Gospel*, a very strange reworking of the Christmas story as I recall, that I picked up while I was a teenager. He was over in Belfast for a retrospective, and I'd loaned the venue some of my original Ken posters for display. I spent an obscene amount of money getting a huge Italian poster for *The Devils* that I'd picked up for £5 (the frame cost nearly 20 times that!) framed as the centrepiece. Ken and Lisi were delighted I was told. And you know, that in itself made it all worth while.

I wonder will people be paying big money for this magazine in 20 years time—will we achieve the immortality of Dick Klemensen's *Little Shoppe of Horrors* for example, or will we be discarded like yesterday's *Gorezone*? I hope we offer something different that our readers want to keep, and if it isn't different, I hope its good.

Till next time.

Robert

Robert

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KEN RUSSELL'S

David Del Valle pays tribute to director Ken Russell (1927-2011), the bad boy of British film

A few days after Ken Russell's death at 84, a typical yet shocking announcement was made in the British press. It stated that Russell's last will had just been read, and it contained his wishes for his funeral.



IT WAS STORYBOARDED, of course, and based rather loosely on the works of the Marquis De Sade, and it called for a cast of no less than 300 extras. The festivities would begin with a three-day Roman orgy centered around Russell's open casket. The director known throughout the film world as Britain's *enfant terrible* would be dressed as the god Bacchus. Russell then requested his coffin to be paraded through the streets in a penis-shaped carriage towed by eight midgets dressed as Adolf Hitler. Why was I not surprised? And oh yes, Barry Humphries, better known to many as Dame Edna Everage, was to perform as a "transvestite altar boy." Perhaps Barry is a little long in the tooth for an altar boy, but he could move up to vicar if needed. And lastly, there would be a 250-foot exploding crucifix. Now that is a funeral worth going to, and there is not a director in the history of film that deserves more than Mr Ken Russell. I was very disappointed to discover that this report was apparently a hoax, and yet it was certainly in keeping with Russell's longstanding bouts of confusion with the press, both in Britain and most of the world. Ken Russell never did anything in moderation, and this is never more evident than in his work from *French Dressing* in 1964 through the filming of *Whore* in 1991. Russell always had an appetite for illusion, with a unique directorial style that informed all his films until the end.

I only got to meet him face-to-face once, but I did my best to make it count. He was a guest at the British Ambassador house in Hollywood during the late

LAST PICTURE SHOW



summer of 1995, and the Foreign Press, of which I was a member, covered the event. I asked my friend Barbara Steele to come with me, as she had never met Russell either, and this was an opportunity to correct that. By this time Ken Russell was somewhat in decline as they say, and his films for Vestron, which included *Lair of the White Worm* and the critically acclaimed *Women in Love* follow-up *The Rainbow*, were well behind him. I chose this moment to find out for myself if he really did still have the footage for the now-legendary "rape of Christ sequence" from his magnum opus *The Devils*.

Russell was deep in conversation with Ann-Margaret when I went up to him. Ann was literally at his feet, devoted as ever to the man who coaxed perhaps her greatest moment on film out of her, when, dressed all in white in *Tommy* (1975), she was flooded by baked beans and champagne. Our little Annie acted her ass off in a no-holds-barred performance as Tommy's mother. When it finally came my turn to speak, I asked Ken if indeed the footage from *The Devils* could be found. He looked rather dazed for a second but quickly recovered enough to explain, "Well, lad, it is more than likely in my garage someplace back in England." Of course, this was not to be the case, and when he realized I was sincere in my devotion to all things Russell, he gave me a few more moments to ask what I would about his career.

Ken was one of the speakers at this garden affair in one of those old sprawling houses in the Hancock Park district of LA that suited the British film industry quite nicely when they found themselves visiting "the colonies," as Ken liked to call us. When I finally found a place to sit with him, he was not as you would expect Ken Russell to be—all fire and barley water—but he became, for my benefit, a thoughtful and very professional interviewee, pausing to collect his thoughts before answering. I began by asking if he ever regretted making *The Devils*, and his response was this: "I have never regretted making *The Devils*; nor did I have the censors in mind while I was preparing

THE DEVILS IS REALLY MY ONLY TRUE POLITICAL FILM



Ken Russell watches Oliver Reed being shaved for his burning at the stake scene

the screenplay. When I first read Huxley's story, I thought it was stunning, shocking and more than likely accurate in its descriptions of the times. In other words, I had to make a film of it. *The Devils* is really my only true political film, since it concerns itself heart and soul with the brainwashing of a population by the church and state. I had tried to base my film on the John Whiting play, and much of his dialogue is there, in spite of what you may have heard from critics that have never read Huxley or seen the play. I saw *The Devils* in the west end with Dorothy Tutin as Sister Jeanne, and she was staggeringly good. She also gave a fantastic performance in my film *Savage Messiah*, as you undoubtedly know, since, dear boy, you were introduced to me as one of my biggest fans."

At this point he was at his best in recalling things, so I pressed on while oth-

ers stood nearby waiting for me to move away, as we were, after all, at a party. Russell went on to say: "During the filming, I also was toying with the idea of making a film about Cardinal Richelieu, played by perhaps Bryan Ferry. It was Richelieu who was the real power behind the throne of Louis XIII, while both men decided the walls of London should come down. The city itself had become a symbol of defiance for both the crown and the church. You know, I was still a Catholic when I began the film, but all that would change as well. *The Devils* was meant to shock people into a sense of self-awareness, to expose the perversion of religion fuelled by man's egotistical desires."

I explained to him that I had seen *The Devils* in the West End when he had two other films running at the same time. He was looking a bit in need of a drink by this point, so rather than be one of those

I WAS STILL A CATHOLIC WHEN I BEGAN THE FILM, BUT ALL THAT WOULD CHANGE



annoying writers that doesn't know when to quit, I got up and suggested I find him a pink gin, which brought a smile to his face almost at once. "Good lad," he said.

Russell loved illusion, and no matter what polymorphous, outré film-going experience he had in mind, the work was done in that unique Ken Russell style that best imposed itself on the film. For example, in his masterpiece, *The Devils*, Russell worked out a careful visual style with his art director, the incredible Derek Jarman (a destructive filmmaker in his own right). Together they created an antiseptic landscape in a decidedly medieval setting. Yet it still very much reflected the modern world. Jarman achieved this look by making all the buildings in London ultra-white and shiny, almost like science fiction. Russell always managed to match the style with the subject. This is true even in the lesser works like *Gothic*, which Russell said to me later on was "such a disappointment because of my blunder with casting and being talked into a music video format which simply does not work for the length of a feature film. I mean, with all that roller-coaster cutting and suicidal pacing, Vestron, the company that paid for it, did do very well with it I am told on video. I think of it now

Ken Russell (bottom), on location with Oliver Reed



Oliver Reed is tied to the sacrificial stake



as a film by [composer] Thomas Dolby."

As I watched Russell work the room, I felt somewhat sorry for him and the situation he seemed to find himself in—the Hollywood of 1995, a town without pity that judges all its talent, good, bad or indifferent, by what they have done lately and, more to the point, its box-office success. In that regard, Ken's last films for Vestron did not rock the film world, even though two of them can now be considered cult classics. I am referring firstly to Russell's zany adaptation of Bram Stoker's *Lair of the White Worm*, long considered one of Stoker's most "purple prose" short novels, filled with Victorian sexual repression. This was definitely in keeping with the themes Russell was fond of revamping, and one could see the beginnings in many of his short bio films for the BBC, *Dance of the Seven Veils*, one of his really zany send-ups of Richard Strauss, was more of a sexual comic strip, and so for the most part is *Lair of the White Worm*. Ken was over the moon with Amanda Donohoe. Ken was convinced that *Lair* would place her in the top rank of female stars after it was released. Donohoe was mesmerizing as the vampire queen and certainly rivaled anything Sharon Stone had done in either version of her *Basic*



Instinct outings, Russell told me that day that the one problem he had was with his other leading lady, the somewhat royal Catherine Oxenberg, who simply would not do nudity, even when faced with being sacrificed to a giant white worm while suspended over a vast, hellish pit. "Her Highness," as Ken referred to her, "wore Harrods silk underwear" throughout her ordeal with vampires and snakes. Ken found this very ironic, since she was and still is married to an actor (Casper Van Dien) who cannot keep his clothes on to save his life in films.

The other film was *Salome's Last Dance*, which would reunite Russell with Glenda Jackson. This film is set in the gaslight era of that long forgotten *Yellow Book* world of Oscar Wilde, and set the tone for what would follow towards the end of Russell's life. Occasionally, out of sheer boredom, he would gather his stock company of local talent and literally sweep out the garage and create art right at home, as he did with the mindboggling *The Fall of the House of Usher*, which can only be appreciated if you are a true devotee of the master's oeuvre.

Around the time of *Altered States*, Russell intended to make his own version of *Dracula*, which I think is how the Bram Stoker connection began. Ken was summoned to LA to meet with the legendary rocker Mick Fleetwood, whom Russell found to be "to the coffin born." Fleetwood was even willing to drain off a pint of blood a day to prepare for the role. Russell informed him that would

not be necessary, as there were other less dramatic ways to look like Count Dracula. The night I finally got to see *Altered States* in Westwood, the word was out, and not since the reissue of 2001 had so many stoners converged on a cinema. I mean, you get a Z-man contact high from just being in the lobby. The film was a hit from that point of view, and I believe Russell was in the audience for one of those performances, which must have left him feeling like he was at last on to something in the colonies after all.

The more I pondered what might have been on Russell's rather lengthy list of projects that might have been, the more I kept coming back to his undisputed masterpiece, *The Devils*, and more importantly it was to convince him to stay with it until the uncut fully restored print could at last find its way home. I had a well-worn VHS copy of the Forbidden Cinema print that the BBC ran several years ago, and that is the 11-minute version containing many of the scenes that got Russell into trouble in the first place. The first time I saw the infamous hornet in the bulb scene, with a very perverse actor named Max Adrian (a Russell regular) attaching them to the breasts of the totally nude and screaming Madame De Brou, I

THE DEVILS WAS MEANT TO SHOCK PEOPLE INTO A SENSE OF SELF-AWARENESS



Vanessa Redgrave as the deformed Sister Jeanne



thought he had gone the limit. Looking back on it today, it is still shocking, but not as much as then, since we have collectively gone where no filmgoer has gone before, and there is no turning back now.

Ken was amused by my passion for the lost footage forever known as "the rape of Christ," and, I believe, strictly for my benefit, promised to "look around for it when I return to England." This footage was removed in its entirety from *The Devils*, which I know was something Ken Russell has always regretted because it made such a statement regarding the ultimate

perversion of religion. The nuns, having given themselves over entirely to dementia and lust, take down a very large Christ figure on a cross and perform every kind of sexual act possible with it. This is, if you pardon the pun, the holy grail of lost footage from the works of Ken Russell.

While much of *The Devils* remains transgressive today, much of the shock value of nun-on-nun action has somewhat diminished over time. One of the nuns, played by Izabella Telezynska (credited as Iza Teller), who later played Madame Von Meck in Russell's *Music Lovers*, recalled to me that "there really is nothing lower than British extras when it comes to figuring out ways to milk their paychecks." She remembered a few of the extras in the rape of Christ sequence going, as she put it, "over the top," and I for one have no problem believing her. The scene of Vanessa Redgrave releasing bile on the altar after her "cleansing" of devils via an enema of holy water simply has to be seen to be believed. Unfortunately, that too has been removed from the final cut.

I will always remember that afternoon, long ago now, when

Ken was still glowing with possibility and projects were on the horizon. The years that followed saw him return to fully explore his love of music, directing operas and music videos and, towards the end, doing his own version of Poe's *The Fall of the House of Usher*. It was very interesting to witness both Curtis Harrington and Ken Russell, though miles apart as directors, interpret the same source material for their swan songs (both in 2003). Curtis's *Usher* was by far the more conventional, and yet it did return him to his avant-garde beginnings, as his very first short film was also inspired by Poe. Russell, on the other hand, created a final phantasmagoria of rock-star behaviour, with nods to Valdemar, black cats and premature burials, all wrapped up in a fever dream created by his mates in his own backyard (*The Fall of the House of Usher*).

Ken Russell is to me a great director not unlike Eric von Stroheim in his prime. Both of these mavericks took the film world by storm, both tested the limits of sexuality and taste, and both, in my opinion, were geniuses of the cinema. *The Devils* is Russell's equivalent of Von Stroheim's *Greed*, and *Lisztomania* is his *Foolish Wives*. Both artists' films suffered under censorship, and now that we have lost Russell both remain legendary filmmakers, the likes of which we will certainly never see again.

A few days after Ken's death, one of his inner circle told me that on his last day on earth, he watched the film *Donnie Darko* again, having become rather fond of the giant rabbit. After the film was over, he took a nap and never woke up. This is the way I will always like to think of him now: with pleasure, knowing he passed from this world without suffering and very much in keeping with that line from the divine Edgar Allan Poe: "Dreaming dreams no mortal dared to dream before."

by David Del Valle

Georgina Hale as Philippe



Amanda Donohoe as Lady Sylvia March



THE DEVIL

The
FOUND
FOOTAGE
FLICK

CAMERA
AND HORROR
AT PLAY

INSIDE



THE DEVIL INSIDE is so miserable at everything, I hesitate to give it any breath or serious thought. It's made with absolutely no care or finesse. I wouldn't call it a film. It's a grime-covered nickel tossed in a shady cashier's tip box at a roadside diner far from town.

If you plan on seeing the movie, stop here, although honestly, don't ever see *The Devil Inside*.

I still have no idea what it was supposed to be about. Let me entertain my memory and briefly test your patience with a haphazard synopsis.

Isabella Rossi is making a documentary named *Michael*. Their film is supposed to follow Isabella as she tries to discover why her mother, Maria, killed a bunch

Heather runs, frantic, into the black forest, screaming, "Oh my God! What is that? What the fuck is that?" The image is black and white. We never see what's outside the window. Good horror movies know their audience. They know what scares them, exercising significant control and mastery over the evil they invent and harbor. Some films that use the found footage model have shown keen awareness of their horror and others have been horrible, slipping dumbly into the realm of awkward, unintentional and terminally vague. In the successful films, the camera is always an inextricable part of the terror and the dread. It lives in harmony with the monsters, witches, ghosts and sociopaths. We go on a wild ride and then crash, inevitably, to our hero's doom.





of people and is now institutionalized in Rome. Questions arise. Why is Maria in Rome? Is she possessed by a demon? Or is she insane?

Isabella meets Father Ben and David in Rome. They are rogue exorcists, embittered by the Vatican's suspect bureaucracy, performing underground exorcisms unapproved by their superiors. It's all very dark, hush-hush and marked by would-be graven intensity. The two pals have their own exorcism station with professional equipment (à la your buddy's makeshift recording studio in Grandma's basement).

I "think" the basic idea is that after

his head. Everybody dies in a car crash.

I wasn't watching very closely. If you replaced all the exorcism scenes with intense drug use this would basically be a movie about hopeless and depraved junkies spinning out of control: *Requiem for a Dream*, directed by M. Night Shyamalan with a really low budget.

The Devil Inside fails because it has no idea what it's about. It has a dozen loosely defined evils all in jumbled competition. Am I supposed to fear

Paranormal Activity (2009)

CAN'T FIGURE OUT why *Paranormal Activity* has been so sensationalized. The internet, I guess. I'm compelled to the franchise on the one hand, but when I watch the movies I'm always ultimately let down. I can't help think the three films are lost and lazy misfits confusing their own potential; talented and erratic artists, paralyzed and unproductive, in the grip of major identity crises.

The problem is simple. The tech-



niques the filmmakers use to induce horror have little to do with the horror they ostensibly want us to fear. On the surface, *Paranormal Activity's* horror is a demonic presence summoned by Katie's grandmother. We learn this in the third installment, when the grandmother tries to help a demon named Toby impregnate Katie and her sister. Out of context this all sounds a little silly. It is. In actuality, this purported demonic horror has absolutely nothing to do with what is really scary in the film.

Watching the *Paranormal* movies, I'm really scared by the horror in the manipulation of inanimate objects, always seen through the lens of a never-ending film roll. I'm terrified by the hyper-focus on domesticity in nameless San Diego. The bland suburban world: reclining chair, patio, pool.

I am chilled by the still shots of a kitchen at night. Household objects are not being used and thus are made strange and defamiliarized. Pots and pans hanging from a ceiling fixture are grotesque



an attempt exorcism on Maria Rossi, the mad old woman's demon spreads like an epidemic to Isabella, Ben, David and Michael, wherein they all start losing their minds. David tries to drown a baby and

the corrupt religious bureaucracy? Demonic possession? Camera obsession? Mothers and daughters? All of these things? None? I have no idea and have been given no reason to care.



and obscure. There is such poignant evil suggested in that alone that corny demon conspiracy and literal possession become a nuisance and a bore.

The frustrating duality between purported horror and actual horror is perhaps most striking in the third film. Dennis, the hopeless filmmaker, stalks his empty house, freaked out by the inanimate inhabitants. The floorboard creaks in the afternoon. A lonely ceiling lamp quivers in the middle of the night. There's almost a parody of the Gothic in this: Roderick Usher's pertinacious belief in the "sentience of all vegetable things" is like Dennis obsessing over the sounds he hears when home alone.

And he films everything. Why is there such a compulsion toward filming a room full of objects? Maybe the real horror is not catching a ghost on tape,

but the ridiculousness of giving these useless and/or unused objects—posters, fish tanks, teddy bears, jewelry, butterflies, paper drawings—a bizarre importance by capturing them on film. "I feel something," Dennis says. "Yeah, I feel something too," his wife Julie tells him. "I feel a camera."

The actual horror is undermined by the gimmicks. Demonology. Bloody Mary. Satanic cults. The movie isn't scary anymore. It's sort of shocking, but that's something else. Yeah, I'm shocked by the twist ending. The grandmother is the ultimate villain? A channel for Toby? No way!

I enjoyed watching this unveiling, recalling the foreshadowing earlier in the film. But the shock mechanics conflict with the terror. I can step back and ask, "Why is Dennis still carrying the goddamn camera around?" It makes no sense. We've left the realm of the camera and officially entered the fantastic world of Demonology and Occult. The camera betrays itself. By virtue of being there it undermines its own appeal and relevance.

Home Movie (2008)

NOBODY I KNOW has even heard of *Home Movie*, and I'm shamelessly proud to introduce them. I live vicariously through their fear, reliving that first time again and again.

One way *Home Movie* succeeds is that it's unimaginable without the camera. The camera is a character as much as it's a means to experience the story. David and



Clare Poe are a weird, endearing couple. They've moved to the middle of nowhere Connecticut to raise their kids, Jack and Emily. They seem to have an oddball but initially innocuous affinity for making home movies. You know how it is. When we're old we can remember afternoons playing ball in the backyard, raking leaves, and all that good shit.

But darkness is descending. An omnipotent and palpable tension slowly transforms into a vague sense that the Poe family is verging on madness and collapse. Jack and Emily are doing weird things. They put the pet goldfish into a sandwich. They crush a frog in a vice grip.

That's not even half of it. The parents' hobby of filming family time is revealing itself as an addiction. There are troubling subtleties. David Poe not only films events, but narrates them. He reimagines everything his family does as a sort of fan-

tasy or game. When Jack is punished for one of his many suspect misdeeds, David films him from a low angle, moving closer and closer, humming the *Jaws* theme tune. He invents a horror show that mirrors the horror actually happening with increasing seriousness and intensity in his home. Movie terror masks the real madness right in front of him that he refuses to see. Who can blame him? His kids put the pet goldfish in a sandwich!

David and Clare can't turn the camera off. The camera consumes them, swallows them up. It's sexual. On their anniversary, David films Clare taking a shower. He hums the *Psycho* stabbing music. She screams. When she sees the camera, she says, "You bastard!" But it's clear the intrusion is not entirely unwelcome. She's definitely aroused: eyes manic, sauced and full of sex.

Weirder, weirder, weirder. On

Christmas Jack and Emily crucify the family cat. By New Year's Eve, David and Clare can't imagine reentering the life they had before they moved to Connecticut. What if their old friends ask how the kids are? Clare criticizes David for not turning the camera off, and yet she can't do it herself. "Can you turn the camera off?" "Sure, I'll tell you what. Why don't you turn it off?" She won't.

During a moment of unimaginable lows, David laments that the evil and mayhem in their house is not him. Clare whispers, barely audibly: "It's not you. It's the fucking camera."

The camera introduces us to the Poe family. The Poe parents become grossly dependent on the camera. The Poe children enter a world of deranged violence, peripherally caught on film. Finally, in a total inversion of power, the kids claim the camera as their own and use it as a toy

in a brutal game against their parents. The Jack and Emily Horror Show. "Let's have a staring contest. I dare you to stare until our movie's done. I bet you, you can't." Every step of the way, you can trace the seamless parallel of the horror entwined with the camera; the two are inextricably linked, married, and fated for doom.

What Makes Found Footage Terrifying?

THE *BLAIR WITCH PROJECT* is a horror masterpiece and one of the scariest movies of all time. For me, part of the fear is sentimental. I wonder if most '90s kids would agree. I remember waiting at home for my older sisters, who had just gone to see the film. There was so much hype. My uncle and mother were having coffee. Should we have let them see this movie? How bad can it be? I went to bed. I saw the witch's voodoo ornaments in the shadows on my wall. I imagined she was out there waiting in the woods behind my house.

My sisters came home late. They slowly filed through the front door. My uncle waited at the top of the stairs. He thought it'd be funny to pull a prank.

My sisters climbed the stairs and didn't speak. I was hiding in the corner, latched on to a banister. Their faces were pale. They reached the top step. My uncle jumped out and screamed. They shrieked. My youngest sister turned around and ran. My mother flipped a light switch and started to laugh. She was standing in the downstairs hallway. I ran back to my room. "Not funny!" I heard my sisters yell. "Not fucking funny!"

When *The Blair Witch Project* was released in theaters, people thought it was really found footage. My oldest sister would tell me what happened to these three young filmmakers in Maryland. She wouldn't hold back, enjoying how scared the stories made me. I was taken by the *Blair Witch*. For me it was hard fact transformed into legend. I never thought of it as a movie. It turned out to be a stunt, but that didn't even matter. It makes no difference if it's Michael Myers or your best friend sneaking up on you, yelling "boo!" Either way, that initial dread and panic you feel is the same. With *Blair Witch*, the idea of gruesome found footage had stuck. It cemented this possibility of unimaginable darkness that was so powerful—who cares what's fiction?

I watched *Blair Witch* again (for about the 17th time) to write this essay, and I still find it creepy and intense. I just can't figure it out. Early in the film, Heather, Mike, and Josh meet two local Maryland fishermen at the edge of the forest. Have you ever seen acting so genuine? I tip my hat to the wild techniques of Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez. Harassing your actors. Depriving them of food. Did they really do that? Good work

In October of 1994
three student filmmakers disappeared
in the woods near Burkittsville, Maryland
while shooting a documentary...
A year later their footage was found.

THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT.

if they did.

Heather especially is impressive. Critics applaud her apology monologue, saying it's the best scene in the film, but I'm more blown away when Josh turns the camera on Heather and humiliates her with raging and venomous scorn. "Here's your motivation: There's no one here to help you!" We realize how reckless and naïve Heather's desire to make this documentary is. We see her total failure. Here's Heather at her most broken, her absolute lowest point. "There's no one here to help you! That's your motivation!"

Like *Home Movie*, there's no way to imagine a *Blair Witch Project* without the camera. That's what's key in the found footage genre. We can imagine most great stories told through film without the medium of film. The Corleone family: There's Don Vito in the garden, in his final mo-

MISSING



In October 1994, three student filmmakers disappeared in the woods near Burkittsville, Maryland while shooting a documentary. A year later their footage was found.

One year later, their footage was found, documenting the students' 97-hour journey through the Black Witch Woods, and capturing the terrifying events that led to their disappearance.

THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT

ments, chasing his grandson before he dies. But take away Heather's camera, and there is no more Heather, because Heather in the woods is Heather being filmed in the woods. You can't conceptualize it any other way.

"She's still making movies," Josh says. In agony, Heather tells him, "It's all I fucking have left, okay?" In other words, it's all there ever was. "Put the fucking camera down." She can't do it. Whatever visual horror is suggested in the *Blair Witch* only exists outside the range of film. Heather is running in haunting sixteen, black and white. She screams: "Oh my God! What is that? What the fuck is that?" It's nothing. It's everything outside the world of the camera.

That is the main reason why *The Blair Witch Project* is totally different from *Cannibal Holocaust*, the movie it's too often compared to. *Cannibal Holocaust* pioneers the found footage model but flaunts the horror on the screen. What's horrific in that movie is the glaring carnage. A total inversion of *The Blair Witch Project*.

What about *The Evil Dead*? It isn't a found footage film, but what makes it relevant is that the horror in the film is the camera itself. Whatever hellfire plague Bruce Campbell and his buddies have released comes rushing at us through the camera. It hunts the actors down. When the actors can't outrun the camera, they are consumed and ultimately become possessed. Since we never see what horror the actors are supposed to be running away from, one could argue that the actors are literally running away from a camera. This view makes *The Evil Dead* an almost totally over-the-top literalization of what's going on in *Home Movie* and *Blair Witch*. It's ridiculous, hilarious and so in-your-face that *The Evil Dead* actually does end up being pretty scary.

The horror genre is, in many ways, the serious filmmaker's playground. It's where directors can experiment with the camera and reinvent the role it's playing in their films. In this respect, despite the failure of *The Devil Inside*, the found footage model has had promising results.

by Kyle Kouri



DIABOLIQUE'S GUIDE TO "FOUND-FOOTAGE" MOVIE-MAKING



OR
HOW TO TURN
AN ARMCHAIR
MOVIE INTO A
MILLION-DOLLAR
CASH COW!



WHO NEEDS A SCRIPT?
NO CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT OR
STORY ARCS ARE NECESSARY!



TIME TO HIRE YOUR CAST AND
CREW. DON'T BE TOO FUSSY
DURING THIS PROCESS...

WRITER: STACEY YAWN



DROP THE TRIPOD AND ABUSE
"SHAKY-CAM." THE AUDIENCE
WILL BE TOO NAUSEOUS TO
NOTICE YOUR MOVIE STINKS!

ARTIST: TAEVOR DENHAM



SLAP TOGETHER A DUBIOUS ENDING.
LEAVE THE AUDIENCE CONFUSED AND
THINKING THEY'VE SEEN
SOMETHING PROFOUND!



FIND A SMART PRODUCER WHO
WILL HELP YOU DUPE THE PUBLIC
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PREPARE FOR SEQUELS!



MONDO PAGAN

**HÄXAN AND THE WITCHCRAFT
DOCUMENTARY
PHENOMENA**

In Western Europe and America at least, cultural morality is drawn largely from Judaeo-Christian principles and beliefs. It may seem obvious, but in the 21st century the world has become much smaller, and knowledge quickly passed, and our literary and artistic endeavours now draw upon cultures from all over the globe. The Judaeo-Christian influence has become background noise, an afterthought.



Hissens: Witchcraft Through the Ages (1922)



Witchcraft 70 (1970)

CURIOUSLY, HORROR CINEMA still allows itself to get caught up in representations of evil, invoking familiar religious symbolism and thought. The Devil and demons are still things to be feared, and tales of possession are familiar fodder for readers and cinemagoers alike. But somewhere along the way those tropes have lost their impact. Once upon a time, anything that was non-Christian held a deep fascination, particularly here in Europe where Christianity held its own. The European obsession with paganism and the occult seems to be engrained on the cultural psyche, for before the arrival of the Romans and Emperor Constantine's take on Christianity, this was a pagan space.

Historical Background

Early literature provides us with evidence that ancient audiences were just as fascinated and excited by pagan practices as contemporary ones. The Roman historian Tacitus tells of the Romans' encounters with the Britons and the mysterious Druids; his account provided the original source for one of modern horror cinema's most iconic images—that of *The Wicker Man*—a giant wicker fetish into which living human beings were sacrificed as part of a mysterious ritual.

By the Middle Ages, Europe was in the throes of the witch-hunt craze, a frightening period of persecution resulting in huge numbers of innocent victims being burned, drowned and tortured to death, all in the name of throwing out the allies of Satan. But the old religions lived on, pushed from the surface, bringing their heads above water at the end of the 19th century through organisations like the Order of the Golden Dawn. The 19th century sees the rise of industry, the prominence of Darwin's theory of evolution and a rejection of established history as decreed by the Church, the invention of photography and film: a series of events and developments that challenged our



as I do in Ireland, I can attest that the old religions are still very much a part of the national identity—celebrated via ancient stone monuments, iconography and traditions that have fed into our Christianity.

Sexy

The representation of witchcraft and paganism on film is in a state of flux. The power of a controversial narrative like *The Wicker Man* (1973)—where a Christian cop comes face-to-face with adherents of the 'old religion' and is promptly sacrificed by them—doesn't hold the same impact today. Instead, a modern reworking would end up feeling like one of those 'American City Kids Drive through the Deep South and End up Molested by Hicks' type films. A sort of religious xenophobia.

Witches have been made to be viewed as sexy and attractive. It probably

started with television sitcom *Be-witched*, and Britt Ekland's turn as Willow in the aforementioned *The Wicker Man* can only have helped. But so much now from *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* through *Charmed* and their ilk have sexualised the presentation of witchcraft—the balance definitely in favour of attractive



young women. Paganism/wicca/witchcraft is of course a sexual religion anyway, but where are the men? Roman Polanski's vision of witches (*Macbeth*) this ain't!

While the subject of witchcraft has been of interest to filmmakers and cinemagoers since the dawn of celluloid (film is after all a magical projection—a fascinating ethereal experience as impressive as any illusionist's trick), it isn't until the late 1960s that a particular movement emerges.

understanding of the world around us and the values that we held on to.

Subsequently wars would decimate the population and increase the uncertainty of the people. I'm over-simplifying, but for some the loss of loved ones drove them ever closer to cold clinical science and a rejection of Christian morality (how can there be a god if this happens?), and for others it drove them ever deeper into mysticism and spirituality—witness the rise of spiritualism and the pagan revival.

Aleister Crowley's public image dominates impressions of the occult in the 20th century. His debauched rituals, his hedonistic lifestyle and a number of scandals made for great

column inches in newspapers of the time. His self-marketing as 'The Great Beast' made him a simple go-to. His image was such that novelist Dennis Wheatley used him as inspiration. Meanwhile, an increasing public appetite for information about these strange cults and ancient-but-

modern practices, popularised via James George Frazer's *The Golden Bough* at the end of the 19th century and start of the 20th, was at least partially sated by the likes of Montague Summers' books on demonology and witchcraft, remaining in print today.

Witchcraft and paganism are wonderfully archaic to the modern Western European; their 'otherness' remains attractive, misunderstood and barely comprehensive to those brought up in ostensibly Christian countries. Living



LEFT: *The Wicker Man* (1973); CENTER: *Witchcraft '70* (1970)



For the purposes of this article, I've opted not to look at documentaries which focus on voodoo, but they should be considered alongside the witchcraft films, and we may return to them in a future article. While the witchcraft documentary isn't normally viewed as part of the Mondo craze, I feel it should be. Like Mondo, these films are dealing with sensationalist topics in a documentary form, exploitation if not sexploitation and a liberal dosage of staged sequences passed off as real.

Witchcraft '70 (1970) has a global view which easily makes it fit with the other Mondo films, moving around the world through a series of bizarre rituals, funky music and curious camera work. The trailer boasts about the use of hidden camera techniques as a way of getting up close to the events depicted, but it is clear that this is nonsense, for the camera work is so intimate at times that it can only have been possible with the full knowledge (and staging) of the participants.

"Lock Them out Forever More"

Two years earlier had seen the release of a far more interesting (and sincere) project. Anthony Balch presented a cut-down version of the 1922 Danish film *Häxan*, by Benjamin Christensen, released as *Witchcraft through the Ages* with a new narration by William S Burroughs.

Ostensibly this is an earnest attempt to recreate scenes discussed in the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*, and certainly with its opening scenes featuring woodcut illustrations from medieval texts, and preponderance of old crones, this is not a sensationalist film in the same way



Benjamin Christensen as The Devil in *Häxan* (1922)

that *Witchcraft '70* is. It is rather like one of those old illustrated lectures—lots of slides of ancient imagery... and then it evolves into something rather special.

There are sequences of puppet animation designed to recreate the medieval vision of hell, and there are a number of scenes with actors that play out the scenes of occult activity. These are in stark contrast to the images of sexy nubile witches that dominate popular culture today—instant they are weathered old crones, their



An old Witch in *Häxan* (1922)



who are used to full advantage in the articles and documentaries about his coven.

British tabloids were filled with stories about Sanders and his witch coven. While he adorned himself normally with a loincloth, the other members of the coven are seen in the altogether, dancing around and engaging in various sexualised rituals with Sanders.

Legend of the Witches (1970) took the so-called 'King of the Witches' and, in a rather adept form of marketing, brought his group to wider attention. Like a modern-day Crowley, Sanders stands at the head of a group of individuals happy to take their kit off for the camera and go through the motions of practising their 'ancient' religion.

Wicca is, of course, all about ritual, and these are essentially well-crafted, thoroughly rehearsed performances that are then put on for a limited and exclusive group of people connected to the group. *Legend* opens up the events for a global audience and asks them all to participate. But the camera is frequently at a distance, taking in seductive silhouettes and observing intimate kissing, placing the viewer once again in the position of voyeur. This is exploitation disguised as documentary. Salaciousness in the guise of impartial objectivity.

That the whole thing is staged for the benefit of the cameras is obvious very early on—the sequence where a new male initiate chases a naked female witch, blindfolded, through a darkened

long lives etched into their faces.

Witness the seduction of an ugly fat priest by an aging woman. Later a priest (the same one?) is tempted by a vision of the devil—a grotesque figure played by the director, Christensen—gleefully flicking his tongue and pumping the shaft of a huge stick in a piece of masturbatory symbolism. This is debauchery and exploitation with a bit of style. Rich tableaux and sumptuous black-and-white photography allow for a beautiful looking film—but the film itself thrives on the thrill of disgust. We love being frightened, and we love being repelled. As Burroughs' voiceover intimates, the friends of the devil can be beautiful, but more often than not they are old and ugly.

There is nudity, but rather tastefully done. Rather with its jazz score and slimmed-down running time, *Witchcraft Through The Ages* is presented as a trippy film—perhaps best endured while smoking something herbal.

Sanders

Herbal enhancers would go a long way to aid any viewing of the series of witchcraft films which feature Alex Sanders. Sanders is a notorious figure in modern English witchcraft, forming the 'Alexandrian' form of wicca and developing a reputation as a shameless exponent of the craft. A rather lanky figure with a voice that would send you to sleep through boredom (or in the case of *Strange Rites*, make you laugh!), he surrounded himself with an assortment of beautiful women,

THIS PAGE: Alex Sanders and his coven

NEXT PRESENTATION AT THE JACQUET-GROSS-BE



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wood, is lit and framed in a completely artificial manner. Attractive aesthetics, but insincere. The sequence nicely foregrounds the chase of Rowan by Howie in *The Wicker Man*—quite possibly director Robin Hardy viewed this before planning his own fictional piece—a film which draws heavily on *The Golden Bough* too.

The slightly shorter *Strange Rites* (1971) is rather more obscure, but equally fascinating as a piece of exploitation. The bulk of the film appears to be set within a strange, eerily lit cavern (mind you, the print I saw was turning pink, so it's hard to judge properly!), with Sanders once again in charge of a group of naked female figures. Cue more of the same sort of quasi-religious, sexualised imagery. Erotically charged, and very obviously staged.

But if magic is a ritual, and ritual is a performance, then does it matter that a documentary isn't really a documentary at all, but a piece of entertainment?

I'd argue that Sanders, in particular, is responsible for the popularised modern notion of witchcraft and depictions, in film especially. He becomes a powerful totem, surrounded by a bevy of considerably more attractive female forms. It is undeniably a male heterosexual fantasy, which fits in with popular culture today. Are there films where the situation is reversed? A high priestess and a string of male coven members ready to prostrate themselves? And if there were, would we look on the sexual role reversal as repugnant?

Once upon a time the nudity associated with witchcraft was enough to tantalise audiences and lure them in, both as practitioners and observers. Now of course, in our technologically enhanced era, pornography is ubiquitous and religions legion. If anything it is now those following a traditional Christian-lifestyle that seem out of place. Yet still the rhythms of the music and the precision of the performance in these films hold our interest.

by Robert J.E. Simpson



THE WOMAN IN BLACK

Is the Verdict In?

THE WOMAN IN Black was a test for both its star and its studio, and the signs at time of writing indicate they've passed admirably.

It was a test for Daniel Radcliffe, now 22, who plays a widowed lawyer at the turn of the 20th century—hardly an obvious next step for the boy wizard known for waving his wand around in the Harry Potter films and, as the protagonist in the 2007 London revival of *Equus*, waving around his, um, other wand. But by all accounts, he has acquitted himself well in the role.

It was also a test for Hammer Films, who have been promising a comeback ever since their ignominious decline in the seventies. Throughout the nineties, the press regularly announced an imminent return for the horror studio, but hopes routinely fizzled. In 2008, something finally came of Hammer: *Beyond the Rave*, a 20-part contemporary vampire serial broadcast on MySpace. It was not good: If this was a resurrection for Hammer, it was not the mesmerizing, majestic ritual resurrection of *Dracula*, *Prince of Darkness* (1966); it was the tacky one from *The Scars of Dracula* (1970), where a vomiting plastic bat revives the Count in a sequence plundered shamelessly from the preceding film in the series.

With *Let Me In* (2010), the contrast in quality couldn't be greater. Reviews were good, but it failed to gain an audience. *The Resident* (2011) was a critical disaster and a flop. Critics generally liked the folksy occult tale *Wake Wood* (2011), but it, too, flopped. It seemed Hammer could

produce quality amid the dross, but the punters weren't interested. *The Woman in Black* would be a massive gamble.

Early signs suggest it has paid off. It raked in over \$20m in US theatres on its opening weekend; takings doubled Hammer's expectations and defied the usual box office slowness of Super Bowl weekend. The film has already recovered its costs.

The critics quite like it, too. *London Evening Standard's* Charlotte O'Sullivan said, "It shouldn't work, but it does." Naysayer Ed Gonzalez of *Slant Magazine* panned it, saying it relied too much on "spring-loaded scares that would get Roger Ebert's blood boiling," and lamenting that director James Watkins didn't care much for the psychology of the characters. But Ebert didn't seem to mind. Acknowledging the weakness of the central character, he wrote that the movie was nevertheless effective because the "haunted house is the star," and he offered favourable comparisons to Murnau's *Nosferatu* (1922).

Have the new Hammer Films seized upon the hit they desperately needed? If a British-made Gothic horror featuring a big British star did so well in the US, it's likely to be well-received in the UK, too. By the time this article is published, the film will have opened worldwide, and it looks unlikely the film will be joining Quatermass in the pit. The omens are good: *The Woman in Black*—and Hammer—will join *Dracula* in having finally risen from the grave.

by David L Rattigan

DR KNOX'S AUTOPSY TABLE

Kevin G Shinnick dissects a key moment from Jacques Tourneur's
1957 occult thriller *Night of the Demon*

Evil is banal. At least that is how it hides itself. It rarely presents itself as Evil, until it is too near, too in-control, too powerful to be denied or stopped. That is one of Evil's greatest weapons: to make us believe that it's benign, or just an everyday mundane occurrence. It hides in plain sight.

Curse of the Demon (aka *Night of the Demon* on its December 1957 UK release) is perhaps one of cinema's most perfect examples of that. In this moody black-and-white classic, a series of violent, mysterious murders all seem to point to a cult leader, Julian Karswell (Niall MacGinnis). The victims were all critics of Karswell, but he is never anywhere near the deaths, and they are ruled accidental.

Into the picture comes psychologist John Holden (Dana Andrews), who disbelieves with his whole being any claims of the supernatural. However, after a chance encounter with Karswell at the National Museum, things get harder to explain. He sees words on Karswell's contact card that vanish, a strange tune runs through his head, odd visions begin to appear, and too many strange events are beyond the explainable.

Basing the script on MR (Montague Rhodes) James' 1904 short story *Casting the Runes*, screenwriter Charles Bennett—a former collaborator on films such as *The 39 Steps* (1935), with Alfred Hitchcock, as well as obscure early horror like *Secrets of the Loch* (1934)—expands the plot, adding great wit and dialogue, as well as

a love interest.

The sequence that best captures the spirit of the motion picture is one where Holden, accompanied by the daughter of one of the victims, Joann Harrington (Peggy Cummins), goes to confront the self-styled Magi Karswell at his expansive estate, where they find a children's party in progress. Karswell used to make his living as a children's magician, "Doctor Bobo—The Magnificent," and he is holding his annual Halloween gathering for local children.

Karswell seems a kindly eccentric (he lives with his mother, who makes ice-cream for the party), but when Holden questions Karswell's true powers, a violent wind storm sweeps in, and the gale forces them to retreat into the house.

Here, though the thin mask of civility remains, the true threat is unveiled, very plainly very matter-of-factly.

Karswell, pouring drinks for them both, his back to Holden, says: "I'm sorry I miscalculated. The wind's stronger than I expected. Much too much."

Holden, accepting the drink, replies: "You're talking in riddles."

Karswell, removing the clown makeup and revealing his true face: "To prove my point. A medieval witch's specialty—a wind storm."

Holden: "Take my professional advice and stick to rabbits and puppy dogs."

Karswell: "You think I'm mad.

Unfortunately, you won't be able to explain away your death on the 28th of this month with my prediction of it at this moment."

Holden, his face turning, less amused: "You're really serious, aren't you?"

Karswell, calmly, still cleaning makeup from his face: "You will die as I said, at ten o'clock, on the 28th of this month. Your time allowed is just three days from now."

Holden, dismissively, sitting down on the edge of a table: "My time allowed? Oh yes, your trick with the card—very good, too."

The camera, which has held all the previous dialogue in a wide two-shot that put them on a fairly equal plane, now cuts to another angle. Holden is now lower in the frame; Karswell, center frame, turning, looms over him, the make-up off, the veneer of civility gone as the windstorm howls behind him through the den's expansive windows.

Karswell: "I'm sorry you remain so skeptical, but as the time gets closer, mental disintegration will set in. First weakness and unsureness, and then horror, as the fear of what's behind you grips your heart. Because it's there, Dr Holden, it's there. It has been since the moment we met in the museum!"

Holden: "You actually believe this nonsense."

Karswell hardly waits for Holden to finish. "I asked you to drop this ridiculous investigation; perhaps you will, before it's too late."

The camera cuts to the previous angle, and Holden stands, regaining equal footing within the frame. "Well," says Holden, quietly, "it's nice to know that I do have a way out, Mr Karswell."

Disgusted, Karswell dashes out of frame and from the room. "The choice is yours" are his parting words.

That, in a nutshell, is the film. Choose to believe, and live, or die, learning too late there are such things.

• • •

Montague Rhodes James (1862-1936) was a medieval scholar who was a provost at King's College and Eton who is better known today for his collection of ghost stories. Oddly, with the popularity of his tales, the only motion picture made of his work is *Night Of The Demon*.

His tales have been adapted to British radio since 1938 (*Madam, Will You Walk?*/Martin's Close, a tale which was also produced in 1940).

In the U.S., the series *Escape* adapted *Casting The Runes* with William Conrad as Karswell. This 30 minute adaptation is available on CD from Radio Showcase as well as on YouTube.

The BBC adapted *Casting The Runes* in 1951, and in the U.S. CBS Radio Mystery Theatre the story was redone as *This Will Kill You*.

The tale was performed once

again in England on January 2, 1981 as *The Hex*.

Too good to leave alone, the new millennium saw the Radio 4 series *The Red Room* perform a 15 minute version (December 20, 2000).

At present, that is the latest audio adaptation of the tale that we know of, though the M.R. James tale *The Mezzotint* was performed October 9, 2009 for BBC 7 Digital.

Television has also had a few adaptations of M.R. James' stories. On May 7, 1951, the U.S. TV series *Lights Out* produced *The Lost Will Of Dr. Rant* (May 7, 1951) starring a young Leslie Nielsen. This production is available on Alpha Video as an extra on the Michael Rennie version of *Dr Jekyll & Mr. Hyde* (1954).

The BBC for Halloween (October 14th) 1954 broadcast *Two Ghost Stories by M.R. James, Canon Alberic's Scrapbook and The Mezzotint*. The tales were produced directed and adapted by Tony Richardson, with George Rose appearing in the second tale.

M.R. James tales in the 1960s began to be a popular source for Christmas spooky tales. Four stories were made for ITV in England as part of their *Mystery & Imagination* series. On March 23, 1968, Robert Eddison portrayed the evil Karswell (actor John Fraser was also in the cast).

ITV revisited the tale in 1979 with another adaptation of *Casting The Runes*, with Iain Cuthbertson as Karswell this time around. Here, in the brief glimpse we get of the creature it appears as a solarized cousin of the creatures from the original *Don't Be Afraid of The Dark*. A nice bit of business in this modern dress version of the tale is that one of the warnings to a victim appears on a piece of television film, but does not appear to have been spliced into the print. Speaking of film, this was one of those peculiar hybrids of two TV unions, requiring studio shots to be on video tape with exteriors on film. This 48 minute version was released on DVD in the U.K.

The most recent outing of an M.R. James tale is the December 24, 2010 BBC2 adaptation of *Whistle & I'll Come To You*, a modern reworking starring John Hurt and Gemma Jones.

With the success of Hammer's recent *The Woman in Black*, perhaps the studio would consider a cinematic attempt at *Casting The Runes*. Similar in structure, the fear is not in your face horror, but the subtle corner of your eye fear of the unknown.

by Kevin G Shinnick



DO YOU BELIEVE?

Sidney Hayers and NIGHT OF THE EAGLE

aka **BURN, WITCH, BURN**

"I DO NOT BELIEVE"

So writes Professor Norman Taylor (Peter Wyngarde) emphatically on a blackboard in the presence of his students, dispelling belief in witchcraft and all the trappings of the supernatural. Taylor's wife, Tansy (Janet Blair), however, has been liberated from so much scientific logic by a mind-expanding experience in Jamaica, where a witch doctor literally brought the dead back to life. It is Taylor's discovery of her convictions that serves as the catalyst for *Burn, Witch, Burn*.

PRODUCED IN ENGLAND in 1961 under the title *Night of the Eagle*, the film was distributed by American International Pictures as *Burn, Witch, Burn* at a time when studios on both sides of the Atlantic were making exceptional genre films. To the US version, AIP added a deliciously demonic rendering of an incantation voiced by Paul Frees to protect the viewing audience from deadly forces from the pits of Hell. This created yet another similarity to the already-renowned Jacques Tourneur film *Night of the Demon* (1958, known as *Curse of the Demon* Stateside). Both films are now staples in most retrospectives of the horror genre around the world, having secured the reputation as two of the finest examples of black magic ever put on the screen.

Night of the Eagle was directed by Sidney Hayers, whose only other excursion into fantastic cinema was 1960's *Circus of Horrors*, regarded now as a truly "Sadian" motion picture whose reputation was linked to Arthur Crabtree's lurid potboiler *Horrors of the Black Museum* (1959), as well as the infamous *Peeping Tom* (1960), by Michael Powell.

After the success of *Night of the Ea-*

gle, Hayers went on to helm many memorable episodes of *The Avengers* in Britain and continued to work on both sides of the Atlantic until his death. *Eagle* remains his most accomplished work. The fortuitous collaboration of writers Richard Matheson, Charles Beaumont and George Baxt turned Fritz Leiber, Jr.'s thrice-filmed novel *Conjure Wife* into a taut, gripping screenplay mysteriously overshadowed by the literary ghost of MR James, whose





time it was played for laughs, attempting a "horror comedy," which featured screen legend Lana Turner in one of her final roles. I am sure the producers were hoping for a "Baby Jane" moment here as we watched yet another Hollywood leading lady finally playing a witch.

The witch in Hayers's version fares much better in the capable hands of Janet Blair, perhaps the least likely candidate for such a role, and she surprised her director and co-star by rising to the challenge, playing Tansy with great style and conviction. I interviewed Janet Blair for the premiere Laser Disc presentation of the film. The still-vivacious actress remembers the production with enthusiasm. She recalls her first day of shooting was Tansy's drowning scene off the Northern coast of England: "It was bitterly cold, and I had to go over this rocky cliff and continue to walk into the ocean for what seemed to be an eternity. By the time I was retrieved out of the water, I was frozen and soaked to the bone. One of the grips ran up to me and made me

own excursion into the supernatural, *Whistle and I Will Come to You*, is referenced in Hayers's film. (The shadow of Val Lewton's *I Walked with a Zombie* is also felt).

Leiber's work first arrived on the screen as part of the *Inner Sanctum* series Universal Pictures had created to showcase Lon Chaney, Jr. after the success of *The Wolf Man*. *Weird Woman* (1944) featured Evelyn Ankers in a part similar to Margaret Johnston in Hayers's version. This adaptation is certainly not faithful to its source, making *Night of the Eagle* the definitive version of Leiber's novel. In 1980, a third somewhat pirated version, *Witches' Brew*, was made without giving Leiber a screen credit. This



ABOVE: Lon Chaney Jr. and Evelyn Ankers in *Weird Woman* (1944)
BELOW: Peter Wyngarde and Janet Blair in *Night of the Eagle* (1962)

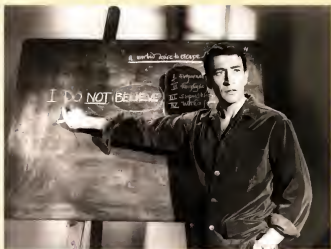
drink from a thermos which was filled with Brandy. Being a non-drinker, I immediately spat it out; so much for the glamorous work of a movie star.

"Originally I was told Peter Finch was to be my leading man, but he became ill, so Peter [Wyngarde] took over at a moment's notice. I quickly became utterly bewitched by my co-star, Peter Wyngarde, who was so dramatic and sexy that I nearly forgot I was acting. I do believe this was one of Peter's largest film roles at the time, and I remember after a day's shooting he drove me to my hotel and continued that atmosphere of a happily married couple. I adored working with him."

As Sidney Hayers fondly recalled to me, the shooting was very quick and fun



to do. After some initial misgivings about the casting of Wyngarde and Blair, he was quite pleased to find these two professionals had great chemistry together. He remarked that even Ms Blair said at the time that she gave this role her all and considered it to be some of her finest work in film. Hayers also remembers that the actress playing the true villainess of the piece, Margaret Johnston, had by then become a theatrical agent representing one of the actors in the film. Hayers persuaded her to play the unbalanced Flora, ruthlessly driven to practice the black arts against Tansy's white magic, thereby creating one of the screen's most memorable witches alongside such greats as Kay Walsh, whose turn in Hammer's *The*



THIS PAGE: Peter Wyngarde as Norman Taylor in *Night of the Eagle* (1962)

Witches (1966) was to set such a standard.

The giant stone eagle which terrorizes Wyngarde was in actuality an eight-foot Styrofoam figure that could do no harm should it fall from great heights. The script called for a full camera, as this prop is transformed from its solid state into a living, winged gargoyle. As Hayers put it, "It is Peter Wyngarde's acting and intense focus that really allows the audience to suspend disbelief—that and, of course, having a cameraman like Reggie [Reginald] Wyer, a real craftsman with monochrome photography, as well as an editor like Ralph Sheldon."

Peter Wyngarde had made a lasting impression in *The Innocents*—without a single word of dialogue as the lustful ghost of Peter Quint. As Hayers recalled, "Peter was quite a performer both on and off camera. The crew was very amused by one thing in particular. You see, Peter was very aware of his physique at the time, since he took great care to be in perfect shape, and remember, in those days it was not so common to see actors going to the gym to work out. We even had him shirtless at one point in the film. However, we had to keep tightening his long shots as he wore the tightest trousers in England. I mean, he left little to the imagination as to his endowments, if you follow me. I don't think this even came up again as

long as I have been directing!"

Burn, Witch, Burn was one of those films I saw for the first time at the drive-in. It is difficult to explain to today's film buffs the weekend ritual of escaping from the rigors of school and parents, going to see a film in your car, at night, out of doors, under the stars—circumstances the nocturnal trappings of the horror genre lend itself to perfectly. Almost all of the films produced by American International were shown at the drive-in, and *Burn* was no exception. I can still see myself sitting in the car windows, rolled-up speakers turned to full volume as Paul Frees begins to speak to us from a pitch-black screen. By the time he is through and we are all under the protection of his spell, the titles begin to appear:

BURN, WITCH, BURN

WHEN *BURN, WITCH, BURN* was being prepared for LaserDisc, I was fortunate to be in touch with Hayers. He was undergoing treatment at Cedars Sinai Hospital at the time, and we arranged to meet at my apartment only a few blocks away. He was a charming man who was modest in recalling the two films that would secure his reputation in the horror genre.



How did the casting work out? Anton Diffring enjoyed a side-career as a villain, not just as Nazis. Circus of Horrors gave him a definite personality as a mad doctor. There was also a certain element of sexuality in what he does.

I was really instrumental in bringing Anton in. There were all sorts of names being bandied around. I felt the character had to have a certain elegance, and he had to convey this to the audience. He had to be attractive and elegant and really played against type. He wasn't noticeably nasty unless pushed.

Your two horror films are quite different in technique and style from the other films you have directed. There are similarities, but I feel these two films made you experiment.

Well, you do, because you have to create effects on the screen, searching for the reaction you want from the audience. You have to adopt a technique that you hope will achieve that end.

How did you go about finding a circus to use as a backdrop?

Below are some highlights of the conversation we enjoyed that day.

How did you come to direct Night of the Eagle?

Well, I became an editor, and during the course of my career I worked for Julian Wintle and Leslie Parkyn. They were producers at Beckindale Studios, and I kicked off *Circus of Horrors*, which was the very first picture I made. We went from one picture to another.

There were three British films made around the same time that seemed somewhat related: Arthur Crabtree's *Horrors of the Black Museum*, Michael Powell's *Peeping Tom* and your own *Circus of Horrors*. Had you seen either of the other two films?

No, I had not [seen *Black Museum*]. *Peeping Tom* was, in fact, made after *Circus of Horrors*. I saw *Peeping Tom*, actually, and I thought it was a quite superior picture. ... It was just ahead of its time.

How do you feel about making the audience a voyeur when you are creating certain scenes? In *Circus of Horrors*, it seems that during certain scenes—the ghastly scene on the operating table and in the circus tent, for example—the film takes on a different kind of technique.

I think one of the most awful things that can happen to a person is to be spied

upon. It takes their privacy away, particularly if the person is unaware of it. It's a thing that always affects me when I see sequences like that, like in *Rear Window* [1954].



ABOVE: Erika Remberg and Anton Diffring in *Circus of Horrors* (1960)
BELOW: Sydney Hayers directs Jane Hylton and Yvonne Monlaur in *Circus of Horrors*

I remember we went up to Liverpool, where Billy Smart's circus was.

Were there any problems working with the animals?

Just once on the floor. Donald Pleasence had a scene with a bear [that kills him]. ... They were rehearsing the scene, and there was a microphone about a foot long. The boom swinger wasn't concentrating too much. He hit the boom arm, and the bear took off, chained to the caravan. This is on the set, mark you.

The caravan just took off and went straight through sets and everything else, the bear just dragging it on the end of his long chain, and the caravan just wrecked half the sets.

So that is a real bear he is fighting with?

No, the one where he is tortured outside the caravan is a

real bear, but when he was fighting it, we made him a stuffed bear. I think there was a trainer who doubled for him when there was a bit of action with the real bear.

Did you have any censorship problems with the operation sequences?

No, we just had a guiding letter at the front that said don't show this or that. We did adhere to that because it would be stupid to have to ruin sequences with rewrites. In reediting, sometimes, the sequences don't go the way they should, and the audience doesn't know why. They just feel a sense of loss there.

It holds up well today because it went as far as it could in both violence and sexuality. It was considered very sadistic when it came to the US. Is inter-

esting that you were able to convey all of this sexuality without nudity. If that film were made today it would be almost impossible to watch. I'm not much for gore in films because, especially in horror films, you can imply so much.

Of course you can. In my opinion, it's many times much more effective. ... I always remember when I was an assistant editor working on a David Lean film, he said: "You're very foolish if you are too explicit in a love scene. Everybody, no matter who they are, they always fantasize about making love in a different way, and if you just show them something that's not their cup of tea, it irritates them."

Were you aware there was a record album done?

Yes, *Look for a Star*. Apparently made it to the top of the Hit Parade! ... I had a call from someone in the States asking, "Are you aware that this song is at the top of the charts?"

AIP also released Night of the Eagle. What do you remember

about casting and setting up that film?

Well the funny thing is the witch, played by Maggie Parker [Margaret Johnston], who was an agent at the time and wife of Al Parker—she had come to me to discuss another actor for the picture. I got her to audition for the part. ... She had been an actress before, and then she was married to Al Parker, and she had become a rather super agent. I still remember her address.

Was Peter Wyngarde already set, or did you pick him?

He wasn't already set. I think it came out in discussion, I was a little apprehensive about the casting of him and Janet Blair, how they were going to work out, the chemistry between them. I didn't know whether they would really appear like a happily married couple. There was a particular difference in thought about certain subjects.



Yvonne Monlaur in *Circus of Horrors* (1960)



A lot of people feel that Janet Blair was a miscast. Yet, she doesn't disgrace herself.

Not at all.

I think a lot of people were surprised to see her give that performance. She is convincing enough. I mean, if the performances were not convincing, we wouldn't be talking about the picture now. But the fact is, she did give the impression that she was so in love with Peter Wyngarde that she would give her life for him. Of course, Peter Wyngarde has been the subject of so much controversy because his career later took a substantial nose-dive over the revelation of his sexuality. I do feel he was set up, and that was terrible. He was a fine actor.

He was. I thought he was great the way he opened in the classroom. Very

authoritative.

Janet Blair apparently remembers this movie very fondly. Do you remember anything that went on during the film that might be an interesting story?

It's very difficult to go back and suddenly remember. She was very effective coming down that corridor with that great knife in front of her. I remember that.

Oh there's a great sequence in there, too, because she's limping.

—like Maggie Johnston—

—which is a marvelous way or transferring. And of course, you have a cat that starts the fire. It's a very effective film. I always thought you must have really been torn about how to convey this eagle coming to life.

I was really. I spent some hours thinking about this. I thought, This could really be the Achilles heel of the film. If this doesn't work, people are going to think, What does all this mean? What is



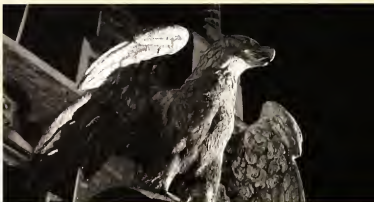
it about? This stone bird suddenly comes to life, and it's chasing him around.

Do you remember when it opened in London?

It did very well. My then-wife went to the toilet after and told me: "You can't believe the conversation I just overheard. Two women were discussing how 'This sort of thing does happen!'"

Witchcraft in England is something that's kind of taken for granted. There are people who will go out at midnight in Highgate Cemetery and prance around in the nude because it is an old religion. How did you come upon that sequence where it's all subjective and you see the graveyard through Janet Blair's eyes, while she's being carried?

I can remember thinking, How am I going to get a real effect of her coming to, and she's in a trance? And what I did—which was an awful thing to Peter Wyngarde, really—I got a nine-millimeter lens, which if you hold it to your chest you can see your feet and you can see the roof of the building at the same time. I stuck [Wyngarde's] face almost in the mattebox so his nose had a big hook like an eagle



and his ears sort of stuck out. I Vaseline'd the edge of the lens, too. His face was very intense. When she came to, Peter looked a bit like an eagle, actually.

Which university did you use for the locations?

We didn't. We used a very old house [near Maidenhead, Berkshire]. On the gates it had eagles. We mounted this enormous eagle, which was about eight feet high, over the door.

In America, they tacked on a se-

quence at the beginning of the film before it starts where a spell is read that protects the audience. They read it here recently at the Newark Theatre. The audience really loved that, although it's a bit campy now.

How did the picture go down with an audience today?

You would be very pleased. I think it would be very satisfying that contemporary nineties audience gets into a state of disbelief. They don't yell back at the screen. There's no camp in this film whatsoever, and what's amazing is you had some rather campy people. Kathleen Byron, for example—one forgets this is the woman that goes berserk in Michael Powell's Black Narcissus [1947]. And you've got Margaret Johnston, who could chew scenery, and Peter Wyngarde, who could be over the top if he wished. And several other people that are in smaller parts.

In fact, the boy got a bit upset because he thought Wyngarde was having an affair with Judith Stott. He used to come a little bit near the edge. ... He was supposed to be [a bit hysterical], but I was always pulling him back.

With regard to wardrobe, were you tempted to dress anyone in black?

No not at all.

You kept it to where the sense of the normal world—

I thought it very necessary that Margaret Johnston was, if anything, more than correct.

"If you take a clown out of the circus and put him at your front door at midnight, the clown takes on a whole different meaning"



Circus of Horrors (1960)

Was her husband unaware that she practiced witchcraft? Because that is the implication.

Yes, he was unaware. Until the end.

And of course, she's killed by the very thing that she tried to use on him. I think this is why the film isn't laughed at today, because this film is so deadly serious about its subject matter. And there's the dramatic intensity of William Alwyn's music, and you've got very competent performers. It all works. Night of the Eagle was so successful, but it was your final horror film. Did you ever want to make another one? Was anything offered to you?

I would've. If I could have found the right material, I think I would like to have done. They're very fascinating to work on. I mean, *Burn, Witch, Burn* I wouldn't call a true Horror film. ... It's fascinating because of its subject matter. Even *Circus of Horrors*, in my opinion, is not really a horror film.

It also could be construed as a kind of psychological love story.

I like the lull of the music of the circus.

One doesn't think of circuses as being sinister, but yet a long time ago, Lon Chaney, Sr. said that if you take a clown out of the circus and put him at your front door at midnight, the clown takes on a whole different meaning. It just depends on your environment. The circus is kind of a magical place and yet you're dealing with a lot of danger because of the animals. You show the different tragedies that can befall people—trying to stay on the high wire or people that place themselves in danger without a net.

The girl on the horse. The girl on the revolving—

Well, that is a famous sequence. It was considered very nasty for its time.

Oh was it?

But you look at it now and it tame. I'm sorry to say it's tame because I remember as a little boy, I may have even looked away. I'd pay good money to watch a horror film between my fingers. In that movie, for that period of time, I'd never seen anything so violent. But then,

I hadn't seen Peeping Tom yet, which then again, isn't as violent but it—

*The image is awful of these girls—
—in death throes, yes. See, but that's what made it nasty. Yet there's really nothing explicit.*

Some of the shots going up the stairs—

It's scary. I think Michael tapped into everyone's fear of a Jack the Ripper character. Seeing women propped against lampposts and going up stairs—it really all goes back to Pandora's box. You almost think that there are no tricks new in cinema. You can always think of a movie in some obscure decade before where these things were possible.

I regret today that somehow the majority of film people are not really interested, fascinating filmmakers. Today, in my opinion, there is very little technique, very little true interest in the subject matter. All they think about is ... sex and violence and making money. We never approached films like that in the old days.

Why do you think that was?

All you thought about was making the best possible thing you could, and you'd spend days of your own time working on this. I know, working among these people today there's not the interest at all—this dedicated interest.

And the actors cared too. Do you recall with Night of the Eagle, did you show it to the cast? Was there a screening before it opened?

That, I don't think happened. ... [Peter Wyngarde] thought it was a good film. He liked it very much indeed. [Janet Blair] wrote me a letter because she had come back to the States by that time.

The director Michael Powell saw both Circus of Horrors and Night of the Eagle.

Yeah, he came out here, and he was at the studio with Francis Coppola. What they were doing, I don't know. They were there, and I met Michael. We knew each other very well, and he came to my home in Westwood. He told me he had seen both of those pictures and thought they were interesting.

It's amazing you didn't end up

with a contract to do three or four more films. You never really strayed from what we would call Cinefantastique. In your television work, your Avengers episodes went right back to this material. When you later came to the US, for shows like Magnum, PI, did you miss the kind of camaraderie and the way things were done in Britain?

Very much so, yes.

Doing all this television work out here, you can really tell the difference. Is it because everyone is rushing to get everything made?

Time and money are the things that matter here. ... It's a much more mechanical approach here.

Talking about television; have you ever noticed how fast the credits roll by? If you're not alert, it's very hard to watch the credit crawl. Most the time they will just cut it off.

Also, I think it's almost indecent what they do here when it comes to the credits. ... It's not fair to the people. They just slam straight through to a commercial. That's what I mean, you see. There is no feeling. ... It's just a raw, calculated way to earn money. It's disgusting. It makes me laugh when they ask if I am "network-approved" as a director. I say, "Well, in whose eyes?"

You're really more that breed of British director that started out in the cutting room like David Lean, Terence Fisher and Fred Zimmerman. Where are you going to learn your craft if you're not continually working on something?

You always see what a good director does. You see why he does it. You can analyze it. I was [David Lean's] assistant. Jack Harris was the editor—*Great Expectations* [1946]. ... My first day in the industry, this very attractive woman came up to me and said, "Do you know if Larry has wrapped, yet?" I said I didn't know. It was Vivian Leigh.

by David Del Valle

The author would like to thank Bill George and his wife for keeping the recording of this interview safe and transcribing it for publication here.

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WITCHCRAFT

The Craft of DON SHARP

Shot in less than two weeks, *Witchcraft* stands as testament to the skill of its director, Don Sharp, who died late last year.

WITH THE AMERICAN Lon Chaney, Jr. as star, and a tight shoot of only 13 days, the results were hardly guaranteed. After a fairly good 1940s as the successor to Karloff and Lugosi at Universal, Chaney's career had plummeted. By 1964, he was a notorious alcoholic, known for telling directors to get what they could out of him before noon. Sharp remembered a very friendly but lonely man on set, a gentle soul who would be "almost grateful when someone would spend ten minutes talking to him." He also remembered the difficulty working with him as the day went on and the drink gradually took its toll. "But by the next morning, he would be so eager, so keen to do right. He was a very sad man, indeed," Sharp recalled.

Although he received top billing, the bloated and worn-looking Chaney's screen time in *Witchcraft* is limited. When he does appear, he stumbles about ineffectively and practically shouts his lines.

The merits of this film can be attributed to a not-bad screenplay by Harry Spalding, competent production values on a low budget, and efficient, constraint-defying direction by Don Sharp.

Spalding's script was inspired by a news story about a graveyard in San Francisco, where people had protested at their ancestors' bodies being exhumed and relocated to make way for a property developer. In *Witchcraft*, a property developer, Bill Lanier (Jack Hedley), recently arrived in England from Canada—Spalding was a Canadian—becomes embroiled in an age-old family feud when his unscrupulous partner decides to bulldoze a cemetery. Morgan Whitlock (Chaney) is



Don Sharp (right) directs Richard Pasco in *Ragunin: The Mad Monk* (1960)





TOP: Don Sharp (right) and Edward de Souza during shooting of *Kiss of the Vampire* (1962)

furious at this "blasphemy," and his ancestor Vanessa Whitlock (Yvette Rhys), buried alive three centuries earlier as punishment for witchcraft, is even more furious. Rising from her grave, she haunts the Lanier family, sending them one by one to their deaths in revenge for the desecration.

It's a story of the old versus the new, set firmly in the context of a changing Britain. The conflict between ancient and modern is deftly symbolized in the opening shot, when the camera pans across from a busy highway to the adjacent cemetery. Having been introduced to the contemporary urban setting, immediately we are plunged into an archetypal Gothic setting. No sooner have the titles finished, than the stillness is shattered as the sound of modern machinery fades in and another pan takes us from a wrought-iron gate, covered in dead branches, to a bulldozer as it begins to tear up gravestones. At this, Morgan Whitlock enters, and like the actor Chaney, he is of another era. The large, cloaked figure waves his cane as he shouts: "This is blasphemy! Stop it!" Whitlock constantly looks out of place in the modern world; later, his 1930s saloon car will look decidedly old-fashioned as it pulls up alongside a shiny, new sports car

outside the Lanier house. (Actually Oakley Court, the Gothic mansion next door to Hammer's Bray Studios on the banks of the River Thames).

The image that opens the next scene is that of a model of a property development. Yet again we see a stark contrast: The camera zooms out to reveal the model is sitting on a table in a large, old-fashioned sitting room in the Lanier house. But in Lanier's world, the old and the new can co-exist. Though he is essentially progressive, he is a decent man who simply wants to build a future for his wife and children, and he sympathizes with Whitlock. "I know all about the population explosion," he tells his business partner. "We can still make money without desecrating a cemetery."

When Lanier arrives at the cemetery that night to inspect the damage for himself, he is pictured with a cross-shaped gravestone to one side and his car to the other; he is a man trapped between two worlds, striving to strike a balance. It is juxtapositions like this—helped by Arthur Lavis's atmospheric lighting—that elevate a film that, if not for Don Sharp, could easily have been cinematically dull.

As the Whitlocks begin to execute their revenge on the Laniers, one particu-

lar sequence stands out as an example of Sharp's taut direction. It is midnight, the witching hour, and a clock chimes. The camera zooms out from a clock tower we assume belongs to a church or chapel (it is actually part of Oakley Court), pans along the side of the house and then tilts up, giving a low-angle shot of the building, reminiscent of Robert Wise's filming of *Hill House* in *The Haunting* (1963). We then cut to the bedroom where Helen Lanier (Viola Keats), Bill's sister, is asleep. The sound of the church clock chiming fades out as the subtle ticking of a house clock—we never see it, but it sounds like a small alarm clock—fades in. The transition takes place without music; the ticking of the two clocks as they intermingle gives a suspenseful rhythm to the scene and once again beautifully reflects the interaction of the two worlds, with the church bell evoking the ancient, the bedside clock evoking the modern, the everyday.

Sharp seemingly enjoyed giving nods to Hitchcock, although never in a clumsy or tacky way. In *Witchcraft*, for example, as Tracy (Jill Dixon), Bill's wife, ascends the staircase with a glass of milk, one can't help but think of Cary Grant's ominous journey upstairs with a glass of milk in Hitchcock's *Suspicion* (1944). Similarly, the attempted murder of Bill's grandmother (Marie



Ney) on the stairs brings *Psycho* (1960) to mind. His earlier *The Kiss of the Vampire* (1962), for Hammer Films, contained several allusions to the Master of Suspense, including a title sequence echoing that of *Vertigo* (1958, with which *Kiss* has some themes

in common) and the oft-noted conceit of a missing person whose existence everyone denies (as in *The Lady Vanishes*).

Sharp did have a knack for articulate, well-paced suspense sequences. The ball scene in *Kiss* is an example. Another well-crafted sequence in *Witchcraft* is that in which Tracy discovers the witches' coven. The roving camera and sparsely scored music (by Carlo Martelli) as she explores the Lanier family crypt give way to a disquietingly static camera as the music ends abruptly and she observes a satanic ritual in progress. The lack of movement makes the quick but relatively subtle zoom-in on Tracy's face as she winces at the sacrifice (of what we assume is an animal) particularly effective. This stillness also heightens the impact of the sudden chaos—no less than two zoom shots and an accompanying scream—as Tracy discovers her brother-in-law's girlfriend and Whitlock's niece, Amy (Diane Clare), is participating in the ceremony. The tight execution brings life into what is, in fact, a fairly predictable plot twist.

This sequence also dovetails nicely into the next sequence, the aforementioned murder attempt, as the sick, elderly Mrs Lanier hears the screams from inside the house. Before going to investigate (and leaving her room for the first time since her husband's death several years earlier), she stops to cross herself at a homemade shrine, a holy altar whose existence parallels that of the satanic altar of the Whitlocks, the family that has warred with the Laniers for centuries. With this entire episode, Sharp has once again produced something compelling from material that is merely perfunctory.

Sharp was later to prove his mettle time and again in horror and other genres with films such as *The Face of Fu Manchu* (1965), *Psychomania* (1971) and, following Hitchcock once more, *The Thirty Nine Steps* (1978). He may not have had the pioneering role of, say, Terence Fisher, but Don Sharp proved himself a consummate craftsman, shaping astonishingly effective thrillers out of meagre resources, of which *Witchcraft* is so elegant an example.

by David L. Rattigan



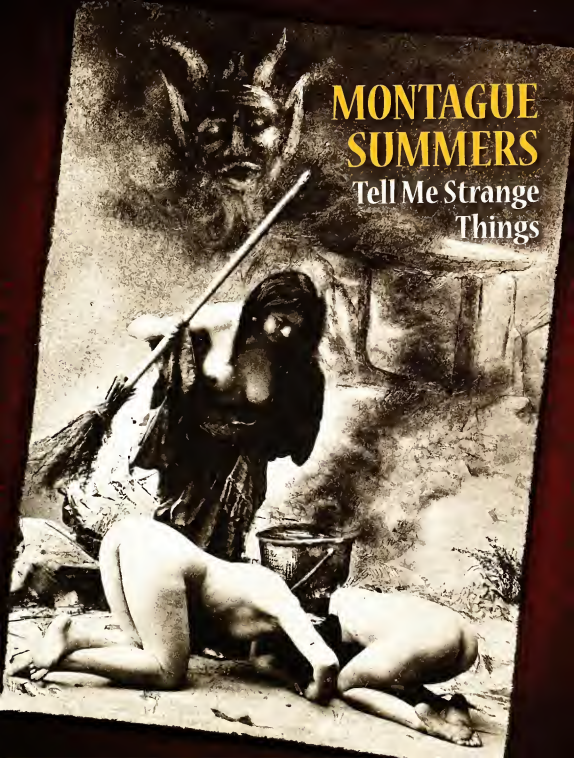
Don Sharp was born in Tasmania, Australia, on April 19, 1921, and came to Britain after World War II to pursue a career as an actor, turning his hand to direction in the late 1950s. He died in Cornwall, England, on December 14, 2011, aged 90.

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MONTAGUE SUMMERS

Tell Me Strange
Things





For anyone interested in matters of the occult it is surely only a matter of time before they stumble upon the writings of Montague Summers. Pitched somewhere between Crowley and Wheatley, Summers was responsible for amongst other things, the first English translation of the infamous *Malleus Maleficarum*. Here, as part of our special issue dealing with witchcraft, Sandy Robertson takes a personal journey through the conflicting life and career of the priest and occultist.

PREACHER, TEACHER, THEATRICAL celebrity, decadent, poet, poseur, authority on vampires, werewolves, demons, witches, ghost stories and Gothic novels, and—possibly—reformed Satanist. Who WAS the enigmatic Montague Summers?

He didn't have a high opinion of the oeuvre of Edgar Allan Poe, but surely would have felt an affinity with these lines from the master's poem 'Alone':

"From childhood's hour I have not been/As others were/I have not seen/As others saw/I could not bring/My passions from a common spring".

Highly regarded for his Gothic Bibliography, anthologies of supernatural tales and more, Summers appeared on the surface to be a Catholic priest who unfashionably maintained, in books like his 1926 *History Of Witchcraft And Demonology*, that witches were not innocent pagans but devotees of a "loathly and obscene creed...blasphemous in word and deed...battering upon the filth and foulest passions of the age", who had thoroughly deserved their persecution by clergy and state in olden times. As one commentator noted, you can almost see him saying this, spittle flying from his lips. Yet this was a man who, in 1907, a year before he sought holy orders, penned a book of decadent verse called *Antinous* (after Emperor Hadrian's toy-boy), adored Oscar Wilde and carried a cane topped by a handle said to be "an extremely immodest representation of Leda and the swan".

One of the poems proclaims: "Across the crowded palace/His bright eyes gleam with malice/When we uplift the chalice/Brimful of sanguine wine/No mass more sweet than this is/A liturgy of kisses/What time the methueglin hisses/Plashed o'er the fumid shrine/He dreams of bygone pleasures/Whose passion kenned no measures/Of all his secret treasures/The lust of long dead men/And thro' dishevelled tresses/He smiles at our caresses/To know that he possesses/As great power now as then/We worship,

love, adore him/Low in the dust before him/We bow down and implore him/Give thanks for our sweet shame/For I have ate life's kernel/Love that is bliss eternal/Dower of a God supernal/And sin is but a name!"

Hardly just the frivolous juvenilia of a rocking, shocking vicar, it's exactly the sort of thing Summers so fervently condemned in later life. Even then some felt the level of learning he evinced in occult matters was, despite the pejorative tone, sinister in a man of the cloth. One of his descriptions at what takes place at a black mass, opines critic Edwin Pouncey, is so vivid one might believe he is speaking from personal experience. A divided personality for sure, and one who is the incredible link between an unmarked grave, a John Le Carré spy movie, some damp cardboard boxes in Canada and *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*!

• • •

BORN 10TH APRIL 1880 into a large family of wealthy Anglicans in Clifton near Bristol, England, Montie loved poring over Gothic tales of skulls and castles in his father's library at Tellisford



Despite attending Oxford University he only got a poor degree. In 1908 he took Deacon's orders, but was said by friends to be neurotic and obsessed with evil. At any rate, his career in the Anglican Church ended when he was charged with (but not convicted of), paederasty. Yet by 1913 he claimed to be a Catholic priest, now dubbing himself Alphonus Joseph-Mary Augustus Montague Summers. Over 60 years after his death, we may finally be close to discovering where

Lurid gossip is not all Montague Summers should be remembered for, however. Earning his bread as an eccentric but erudite London schoolmaster (boys dubbed him "Wiggy" due to his odd hairdo) he published ground-breaking editions of Restoration dramas at a time when such plays were dismissed as the frippery of a bygone age. Made a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, he formed the Phoenix Society to perform many of his favourites with latterly famous stars

A celeb in his flowing, bat-like cape, Montie was also a member of what his bibliographer Timothy d'Arch Smith has been pleased to call "a cabal of homosexuals", the British Society For The Study Of Sex Psychology, which also counted Havelock Ellis in its' ranks. Under this banner he issued the first ever English work on De Sade.

He was also the only English member of the J.K. Huysmans Society, a French association for devotees of the author of *La Bas*, the then-controversial novel of Satanism, and a man as torn between sanctity and sin as Summers himself.

The late Father' Brocard Sewell, a Summers devotee, wrote that Montie

habitually wore "a long frock coat, purple stockings, buckled shoes, tall mounted cane, and hair shaved...until it almost appeared to be a short wig". He also had a dog named after sorcerer Cornelius Agrippa, and his writing style was full of archaisms. "Budge rims the toge-man," he once wrote, "and prince pring is off to see the world". A budge is a sneak thief, to nim is to grab, and a toge-man is a cloak—all words that had likely not been heard in a century or more at the time Summers was writing.

His studies like *The Vampire In Europe* and *The Physical Phenomena Of Mysticism*, brim with arcane lore (which he seemed to believe in implicitly) from his own enormous collection of rare, curious works in many languages. When the

writer Paul Dehn interviewed him in 1933 he made such an impression that nearly 30 years on Dehn included a scene in his script for *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold* (based on the Le Carré book) where Richard Burton is tasked with finding the right slot for Montie's opus *The Werewolf* while working in an occult library. [1]

His resurrection of the "horrid" Gothic potboilers mentioned in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey* stalled after only three volumes due to poor sales, but his *Supernatural Omnibus* remains a favourite volume of classic ghost stories to this day. Summers got into hot water over his translations of risqué items like *The Confessions of Madeline Barent* for oddball publisher Reginald Ashlev Caton's Fortune Press. Seized





and destroyed for obscenity in 1934, it is the literary predecessor of what *Diabolique* readers would doubtless refer to in cinema as "Nunsplotation".

Naturally, Montie knew other occult celebrities. Dennis Wheatley – hugely successful author of black magic thrillers like *To The Devil A Daughter*, the movie of which was recently featured in this magazine [see 'Little Girls Should Be Seen' in issue 2, Ed.] – visited him in Oxford. Already creeped out by a huge toad in the garden and large spiders in the bedroom, when Summers got enraged by Wheatley's refusal to buy a book from him the novelist faked a telegram saying a

relative's illness required his immediate presence, and fled. In the aforementioned novel, published in 1953, the evil Canon Copely-Syle with his soft hands and pink cheeks is clearly a physical ringer for Summers.

Wheatley also used the legendary occultist Aleister Crowley for the dastardly Mocata in *The Devil Rides Out* (1934). One would think that Crowley and Summers would be on opposing sides, given the contumely heaped upon the former's head during his lifetime, yet that is a moot point. Summers kept a dossier on Crowley's doings and they dined together amiably when they both lived in Richmond, London. Crowley joked that he turned Summers into a giraffe, but said the cleric didn't notice! Strangely, while Summers is still considered "iffy" in occult AND religious circles, Crowley has triumphed over the gutter press's lies and now has his picture in the UK's National Portrait Gallery as well as being voted one of the



top 100 Britons of all time in a BBC audience poll. [2]

Many found Summers fascinating company, however, with a moon face and a high voice that wasn't above indecent anecdotes. Others had grave misgivings about his ecclesiastical status and sinister reputation. One particular Jesuit was alarmed that sprinkling with holy water had no effect. Summers retorted: "Ah, if you'd sprinkled me on hallowed ground

I should've spun!"

And yet Summers was a man who brought out editions of several witch-baiting manuals, including his translation of the notorious *Malleus Maleficarum* by Sprenger and Kramer. [3].

Towards the end of his life he lived with manservant Hector Stuart-Forbes. It was once said that you never saw Summers, Hector and their dog all together, some hinting the servant was the dog in shape-shifting form! Montie died at home on August 10 1948, and Hector was laid in the same plot two years later before the will was proved. For 40 years scholars including the late Gothic expert Dr. Devendra Varma bemoaned the sad state of affairs that left that plot unmarked. In the late 80s the present writer with the collaboration of Edwin Pouncey organised The Summers Project to rectify the situation. After great legal difficulties we finally obtained permission while we gathered donations from fans including Arthur Machen's friend Oliver Stonor and H. P. Lovecraft scholar Kenneth W. Faig, and Summers now has a fine slate grave-stone, bearing his undergraduate catchphrase, "Tell me strange things". His and Stuart-Forbes's grave is in Richmond Cemetery. Spookily, just as the stone was ready to be installed in the graveyard the mason found it was badly split and had to start over – doubtless Montie's enemies would say God didn't want his presence in holy ground to be noted! A private unwilling took place after a rather sensational article in the local press made further publicity unwise, but Father Sewell read prayers for a man he rightly called "a fine scholar", emphasising that his priesthood was "morally certain" and that even some of his personal enemies accepted the fact. Father Brocard and Tim d'Arch Smith were guests of honour on that day in late November 1988, and quite rightly so because of their years of effort to keep Summers's name and works alive.

How to explain the riddle of this man? For many years it had been believed that after his demise the landlady had disposed of many of his papers and books in lieu of rent while Forbes was absent





one day, chucking priceless items into a barrow for sale for a pittance to a general dealer or junk shop owner. However, in recent years relatives of Forbes in Canada revealed that they had a cache of this material in some water-damaged boxes. A bookseller who examined them stated that not only did they include the manuscripts of Summers' fabled lost book *Six Ghost Stories*, and his play on the forger W. H. Ireland, a monogrammed portable writing desk and a reliquary, but also ordination papers. Details of this were not given by the viewer, but they appeared genuine. Yet the papers recently posted on the web were those for the earlier tenure in the Anglican Church and did not relate to his Catholic priesthood. Let us hope

some enterprising publisher at least will purchase the rights to *Six Ghost Stories* and issue it in a suitably lavish edition. [4].

Also sadly as yet unpublished (though prepared several years ago) are the extraordinary memoirs of an elderly man—now deceased—who, as a young actor, using the pseudonym Anatole James, was close to Summers. He reveals that he accompanied Montie, who was “made up to the eyes and reeking of scent”, as they trawled the streets for his prey—devout young Catholic boys to seduce and corrupt. The man who inspired the surname of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* (Buffy Ann Summers) and who seemed so devoutly holy, James says, held a black mass where young Anatole witnessed him

sodomise a youth and insert holy communion wafers into the rear end of a pet dog! He then kissed the animal and said, “Never mind, it’ll be your turn next time”! I wonder if he meant the dog would be giving or receiving?! One day some time later, Summers cut James dead in the street. They never spoke again, and Summers became the witch-hating ecclesiastical anomaly of legend—on the surface, at least. Timothy d’Arch Smith is of the opinion that he may have had a shock of a magical nature—learning not a moment too soon that God and the Devil are professionals and that dabblers need not apply.

Montague Summers—enigma be thy name!

by Sandy Robertson

• • •

1. The effects man for the movie remake of *The Wolf Man* recently wrote to *Video Watchdog* magazine saying his work was worthwhile if it inspires people to read Summers.
2. http://www.bbc.co.uk/pressoffice/pressreleases/stories/2002/08_august/21/00_list.shtml
3. In the movie of *The Da Vinci Code*, Dan Brown's novel, a copy of the *Malleus* with Montie's name as translator is seen onscreen.
4. The papers from Canada are now at Georgetown University, where they'll be made available for study in due course. They are interested in hearing from publishers keen to publish the unissued manuscripts.



La Vergine di Norimberga

"Our ancestors had imaginations that were positively—diabolic!"—*The Punisher*

THAT'S QUITE A poetic name to apply to what is, after all, a brutal instrument of torture," comments a suspicious Rhine-land doctor after being shown the Virgin of Nuremberg by its proud owner, in the 1963 film of the same name. And it has to be said, he has a point, the Virgin being what is better known to most as an Iron Maiden, the infamous anthropomorphic casket designed in the image of the Virgin Mary, with an inner door lined with lethal metal skewers. Appropriate then, that the film which takes its name should also be one of the most graphically violent Italian horror films of its decade.

La vergine di Norimberga, released in the US and UK under the rather cl-

iché titles of *Horror Castle* and *The Castle of Terror*, respectively, marks the first foray into the (by this point thriving) Italian Gothic horror cycle by journeyman director and one-time professional soccer player Antonio "Anthony M Dawson" Margheriti. Although never quite afforded the same retrospective respect and admiration as his peers Mario Bava and Riccardo Freda, Margheriti is nonetheless a towering figure on the filone (Italian "formula" film) landscape, directing three key horror films of the "Golden Age," along with forays into other genres including westerns, pepla, spy films and sci-fi mini-epics, at the outset of a career that would span 49 years and 57 films. His best Gothic work of the sixties was yet to come, *La vergine* at the very least makes for a noteworthy start, despite at several junctures having the flavour of a routine potboiler.

Filed in ultra-lu-rid Kodak Eastman-color, the narrative purports



AN
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GUIDE TO
ITALIAN GOTHIC

to be based on a pulp novel by a long-forgotten (if he ever existed) author called Frank Bogart, and adapted for the screen by the busy Ernesto Gastaldi, his first work in the genre since the previous year's *The Horrible Dr. Hichcock* (see *Diabolique* #5), French writer, actor and director Edmond T. Greville (his last film credit before his death in 1966), and Margheriti himself. Filmed in around three weeks between Incir DePaolis Studios and the Villa Sciarra, both in Rome and looking like it, the tale is set in an unspecified area of Bavaria, presumably near the city named in the title.

It commences with Mary (Rossana Podestà, best known for her lead role in Robert Wise's *Helen of Troy*, 1956), awaking in her husband's ancestral and decidedly Gothic castle to find

that he isn't there beside her. Disturbed by his absence and the mandatory raging storm outside, she lights a candle and creeps downstairs, only to hear the strangled screams of a woman in pain. Following the noise and finding a stray stocking on the floor, she is led to what appears to be her husband's very own in-house torture museum, and, at its far side, the titular Virgin of Nuremberg. She approaches the monstrous casket with a mounting sense of dread and, swinging open its door, is horrified to find the corpse of a blonde woman, skewered on the spikes, with bloody, empty sockets where her eyes should be.

She faints (naturally), and the camera pulls in on the Virgin, its door now swung shut, and as the title card comes up, a rather slinky, sexy jazz theme begins—disconcerting the viewer, who until this moment had been led by unmistakably Gothic trappings to believe they were watching a film set somewhere in the mists of history. As the titles end we are catapulted even more in to modernity when the jazz trumpets flare and we see a syringe injecting into Mary's arm.

The sixties it may be, but there's nothing modern about the way her husband, Max (French Polynesia born Georges Rivière), reacts to her trauma. Our prime suspect from the outset, the visiting lord of the manor (who helpfully explains that he only comes to his castle "every six months on visits") has her confined to bed, doped up on tranquillisers and condemned to housebound existence doing absolutely nothing, with him constantly and mysteriously absent. With a husband like this,

it's a wonder that the poor woman hasn't already gone the same way as the heroine of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's story *The Yellow Wallpaper*. "My wife likes any sort of make-believe," Max explains to the local doctor, who, not being a complete idiot, is instantly hip to the fact there's something amiss. "She's like a child."

In any case, it soon emerges that the murderer is, in fact, someone lurking in the castle's seemingly vast network of catacombs masquerading as one of Max's ancestors—the Punisher, who three hundred years ago roamed the province, captured adulteresses and 'tortured them to death in the Virgin of Nuremberg', clad in mock-medieval executioner garb redolent of the grim figures from the arresting opening of *Black Sunday* (1960), or the villains of several of the German krimi films made in the period. Now's prob-

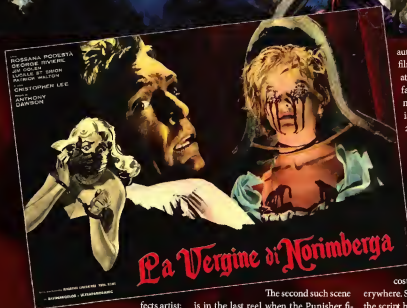
ably not a good time to point out that it's widely known that Iron Maidens were, in fact, created at the beginning of the nineteenth century and not, as the script assumes, in medieval days of yore.

Max and his scarred in-house torture museum curator Erich (none other than Christopher Lee, in the first of several sixties Italian horror escapades) both serve as red herrings for much of the film. After another woman is horribly murdered, the Punisher is revealed to be Erich's father, a former Nazi general who was punished for an assassination attempt on Hitler by having his face surgically transformed by demented SS surgeons into "The Living Skull—their masterpiece!"

As such a shocking revelation suggests, *La vergine* does indeed set new standards of cruelty for the horror film and

prefigures the more blood-spattered direction that Eurohorror would take in the late seventies and early eighties. Although there are but two de facto torture scenes, both have an unforgettable impact that must surely have shocked audiences of the time. In the first of these, the Punisher, his identity still hidden by his black executioner's hood, captures a nameless female victim (Lucile Saint-Simon, a supporting player in a small handful of films including 1960's *The Hands of Orlac*, starring Christopher Lee), ties her to a chair, and, taunting her, fastens a basket containing a starving rat to her face. As Mary manages to free her from it, the viewer notices before the victim does that the rodent has chewed off half of her nose. This is represented by a horribly realistic wound courtesy of director Margheriti himself, who was also an accomplished ef-





fects artist; a moment later, we can't help but shudder in fellow-feeling as we hear her screams of anguish when she realises the extent and implications of her face's mutilation.

The second such scene is in the last reel when the Punisher finally manages to get hold of Mary, who of course is his favourite torture instrument's namesake. When he ties her to a table and leers over her with his terrifying, sunken skull face, the modern viewer

everywhere. Showing the influence of Bava, the script has Mary at one point run out into the grounds at night, where the trees seem to hurl themselves towards her, becoming hued a deep red, through the use of gels. While the director's use of colour does not equal Bava or Fredi's mastery, it

automatically contextualises the film as the direct cinematic relative of modern torture-based fare like *Hostel* (2005), but more precisely the recent Italian shocker *Shadow* (*L'ombra*, 2009) from Federico Zampaglione, with its similarly skeletal, sinister antagonist and Nazi sub-plot.

The blood on display is the exact hue of "Kensington Gore" and this is echoed throughout the proceedings by the set design. From the drapes of the castle to the Punisher's costume, that same tincture is ev-

ertheless, if perhaps over-simplistic.

The film looks deceptively lavish on its low budget, thanks to the set design and the fine photography from frequent Margheriti collaborator Riccardo Pallottini, although a major flaw in the film's look is some unintentionally amusing miniature work in the last reel. When, in a forties serial style moment, Herr Max escapes from the waterlogged cave in

which his crazed father tried to drown him, the moment is represented by what looks like a tiny doll being tossed through a dodgy model hillside. Soon after, Erich looks up at an obviously minuscule castle parapet. It certainly couldn't have been on the strength of these shots that Sergio Leone later hired Margheriti to oversee the special effects on *A Fistful of Dynamite* (*Giù la testa*, 1971).

Christopher Lee gets a chance to play a fairly sympathetic character in the form of Erich, belied by his threatening physique and facial deformities. Although not the murderer, Erich has, along with Max, been aiding and abetting the latter's father by covering up his crimes, with Mary at one point

catching him polishing the skull-faced killer's torture implements, which are of course stored in a red velvet-lined box. His loyalty to and affection for his wartime master verges on the homoerotic, with the latter dying in his arms as the castle burns down at the film's climax. "Together," he says, "like we were before." Sadly, Lee is dubbed by another actor here, as he would be on many other Euro escapades, although at least some attempt has been made to provide a voice that roughly resembles his distinctive rumble rather than an incongruous American accent, as in other instances.

An uncredited Mirko Valentini—dubbed with a slightly amusing but appropriately cruel-sounding James Mason-esque voice in American prints—plays Max's ex-Nazi father under heavy makeup. His unmasking scene is another of the film's major shocks. Many of the cast and crew, as had become customary, had their names anglicised even on the Italian prints, obscuring some of the supporting players to the extent that the IMDb still lists many of the sup-



DAS SCHLOSS
DES GRAuens

porting cast under random, invented names like "James Borden" and "Bredon Brett." Libyan-born "Mary" Rosana Podestà was the wife of the film's producer, Marco Vicario, who would also co-direct *Mondo Cane* clone *Il pelo nel mondo* (US: *Mondo Inferno*) alongside Margheriti in the following year.

The Virgin of Nuremberg was no doubt considered by most contemporary critics to be nothing more than a run-of-the-mill programme-filler, but more recently, thanks to its 2003 US release DVD, it has been reappraised as a work in the upper ranks of the "Golden Age Gothic" canon, coming just below works by Bava and Freda. As more once-conservative histories of Italian film have begun to admit that the filone film is important to the overall development of cinema, *La vergine* begins to be at least mentioned in such histories; two recent examples are Peter E Bondanella's excellent revised version of his *A History of Italian Cinema*, and Howard Hughes's flawed but immensely readable *Cinema Italiano*. Christopher Dietrich at Kinoeye calls the film "a galvanising moment of mid-1960s Italian Gothic [that] epitomises and legitimises the stellar reputation of Italy's 'Golden Age' of horror output." Slightly over the top perhaps, but one can't deny that the film, and the figure of Max's father, the Punisher, does have a haunting power that lingers in the mind.

Nevertheless, in Gothic horror terms, the best was yet to come for Antonio Margheriti. But before exploring what was perhaps his finest hour, there are more from Freda and Bava to consider first, starting in a couple of issues' time with Freda's *Hitchcock* follow-up, *Lo spettro* (also 1963), better known to English audiences as *The Ghost*.

by Rob Talbot



of MENACE and MAMMARIES

A GOOGLE SEARCH for facts about witches and breasts turns up a reference to *The Witches of Breastwick*, a 2005 erotic film featuring lashings of sex pinned gracefully (one assumes) on a story about three busty women who try to bring a legendary witch back from the dead. Then there's the story of an elderly Zimbabwean witch caught in a state of undress nuzzling a teenager's breast.

But neither of these is what I was hoping for. I was, in fact, looking for something to shed light on a fascinating passage from 17th-century English Puritan Nehemiah Wallington. Writing of witch trials under the "Witchfinder General," Matthew Hopkins, Wallington wrote in his notebook:

There were at least XXXVIII witches imprisoned in the town of Ipswich all of which (except one) by the testimony of the town searchers confess that they have one or two paps on which the Devil sucks, divers of them voluntarily and without any forcing or compulsion freely declare that they have made a covenant with the Devil, to forsake God & Christ and to take him to be their Master...

"Paps" were breasts. It was, I discovered, routine for specially appointed "prickers" to examine suspected witches for evidence of marks, blemishes and moles that could be supernumerary nipples. It's not hard to imagine how the idea of a witch offering her breast to Satan might have arisen; the image is a diabolical inversion of that of the Virgin Mary feeding

the infant Christ.

Feminist scholar Marilyn Yalom notes how, in a similar inversion, witches' breasts have ordinarily been depicted in art as flat and drooping, the opposite of traditional western images of a full, plump bosom, the definition of female beauty.

It makes sense, then, why Ann Boleyn, the vilified and eventually executed wife of King Henry VIII, has historically been subject to accusations of possessing a third breast. The mythology surrounding witches and breasts appears to have lived on in the saying "As cold as a witch's tit," an expression of the "hostility some men feel toward the female breast when it is not a source of pleasure or nurturance," according to Yalom.

Michael Reeve's 1968 film *Witchfinder General*, based loosely on the conquests of Matthew Hopkins, shows the practice of pricking for evidence of witches' marks. The most gruesome of these scenes were cut from the theatrical film. In Hopkins's day, the absence of blood upon pricking was a sure sign of witchcraft. In fact, a bit of ingenious sleight of hand was used to fake the results quite easily.

Pages from Wallington's 350-year-old diary, containing his account of a witch trial in Hopkins's home village of Manningtree, Suffolk, were electronically scanned by the University of Manchester's John Rylands Library in 2011. The curious can read them online at

www.library.manchester.ac.uk

by David I. Rattigan

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TO AFICIONADOS OF horror cinema, there are two types of film. Firstly, there is the in-your-face approach of modern films like the controversial *Human Centipede* duo, where any sense of subtlety is sacrificed for pure shock value. Then you have the old-school horror of a psychological nature, which plays on the mind and emotions, lasting long after you've left the cinema or turned the television off. *The Monk*, the new film from German writer-director Dominik Moll, is very much in this second category—a superior Gothic chiller, guaranteed to haunt you.

Based on the classic 18th-century novel by Matthew Gregory Lewis, the story focuses on the rise and fall of a Capuchin monk in 17th-century Madrid. Abandoned on the steps of a monastery, Ambrosio is raised by its monks, eventually becoming the country's most feared and respected preacher. It is perhaps inevitable that Ambrosio, esteemed so highly, should come to believe the hype of his own virtuosity and righteousness. However, as is often the case, pride comes before a fall, as Ambrosio tumbles in dramatic fashion, succumbing to the temptations of the flesh and a recurring dream which haunts his every waking moment and threatens his very sanity.

The Monk is definitely aimed more at the thinking man than the teenage omniphex audience. The way it works beneath Ambrosio's skin as he is pushed to the limit by his personal revelation that he is not the saint his flock believe him to be, but in fact a fallible human with the

same temptations as his fellow men, is truly disturbing. The film's stripping of the facade and hypocrisy of the Catholic Church as it lays bare its obsession with the purity of the body even over that of the soul is equally unsettling, highlighted by the heart-rending sub-plot of a young novice nun and her humiliation at the hands of her Mother Superior (a beautifully icy and sadistic performance from the legendary Geraldine Chaplin).

The other lasting impression of *The Monk* is in its chilling on-screen vision, against which these said psychological neuroses play out. From the opening scenes, as a hooded figure steals through the rain lashed streets of Madrid during a raging thunder storm to deposit the infant Ambrosio at the door of the monastery (after thinking better of drowning him in the local river), the film is a feast for the eye as well as the mind.

Moll, along with cinematographer Patrick Blossier, captures the bleakness of life within the confines of the monastery in an array of grey and moody canvases, contrasting starkly with the arid landscape of a sun-bleached Spain beyond its fortified walls.

Having said this, *The Monk* is not averse to its fair share of what might be considered standard horrific elements. The introduction of a mysterious young man who hides his features beneath a creepy wax mask, and whose arrival at the monastery heralds a series of bizarre events culminating in the breakdown of Ambrosio's holier-than-thou facade, provides the film with some suitably macabre moments. The final realisation on screen of Ambrosio's haunting dream and his disintegration as a person, as well as the film's ultimate denouement within an arid and barren futuristic landscape, will leave a lasting image on the viewer more harrowing and surreal than the physical brutality of much seen in contemporary horror cinema.

by Cleaver Patterson

Reviews

The Monk

Written and directed by
Dominik Moll

101 mins

Distributor:
Metrodome (UK)





Balancing Act

by Joan Eyles Johnson



She liked to leave the cold kitchen every night after doing the dishes to walk along the edge of Lake Waushakum as far as the Hastings' boathouse. There was never anyone else out at that hour, probably all attached to their computer screens in postprandial pursuits of company. She had no companions, only family. A husband. A daughter.

This evening's walk was like all the rest except for the small tingle in her head as if she had forgotten something that continued to tug at her until she gave it concentrated attention. But not now, now when it was twilight and winter was coming in like a familiar friend. She snuggled down into the down of her jacket collar. She walked by the fading rock roses spilling over the hillside to her left, pink and white flowers cascading like unwanted leftovers from the graveyard above, a gush of nature screaming: "There is still life here." As a teenager, she had walked strollers in that hilltop stone garden when babysitting a neighborhood children, reading the names and talking to the residents who, she knew, listened to her troubles. She walked faster now, trying to escape that nagging something that pulled at her like a tug and refused to allow her to relax. When she approached the Hastings' boathouse she saw a small rowboat, rusting, green paint peeling, bumping the little ripples that rolled gently from across the lake. The oars dangled in the locks, scraped against the boat and threatened to slip out and sink to the bottom. Who could have been so careless as to leave them in the water like that without tucking them neatly in the boat as she had been taught to do?

She moved to the water's edge for a closer look and was startled by five long fingers poking up out of the gray speckled scum lining the shore. She drew closer cautiously, ever so cautiously, until she

could plainly determine they were human fingers pointing up through the slime—a thin death-hand. It was the hand of a young woman, a child, she could not tell. Old Mr. Hastings had no wife, no children. She sat down on the tangled bank of broken twigs, her feet almost over the edge of the dank grass spiking through suds masking everything below it. She sat staring. Transfixed. Someone had suddenly left the oars dawdling in the boat, had not put them properly together side by side properly. Someone had been in a hurry to escape the scene she thought. Could the person attached to the hand have jumped into the water to drown herself? It was much too shallow here for such a dumb idea. Had someone, perhaps, been waiting to push her into the lake once she had breathed her last? Had someone been on the lake with her, a lover maybe, who knowing night was coming, brought her to shore to hide his crime? Was it a violent interlude, a romance gone sour, reaching a deadly zenith in a panic of passion? She enjoyed imagining, staring at the pale fingers clutching air like a penitent asking forgiveness from the ashen sky. That might not be a boat from Hastings' house at all. She could not remember ever seeing one before and she had lived here since childhood when Mr. Hastings had a wife and twin boys. She remembered when they all caught scarlet fever and died within days of each other. It had been the first time she saw anyone dead, the cemetery, the inside of the big Hastings house, and here was another tragedy. She studied the edge of the lake. What was it and what caused the thick gray froth? It was not a proper grave for a lovely corpse. She felt that sharp sting inside her stomach she always got when standing on the top of a cliff, a rooftop or in a rocking boat. The worst feeling in life, she thought, is falling.

That moment when you know it is inevitable that you are going to hit bottom and nothing can be done about it. She began to feel a cramp in her stomach, but she simply bent over and stayed staring at the hand, slowly growing into a camouflaged shadow. She had been there for a half an hour picturing a body under the muck and oil on the water, thinking of it bloated, eyes bulging open, staring at her from its murky grave when the sharpness in her gut made her jump up, finally, to go home. Home.

She would not tell anyone there what she had discovered. She would keep it inside as little by little the town began to miss someone and she would listen to the talk, the whispers in the market, at the hairdressers, in church. It would be a delightful secret she could keep as her own for a while, hers alone while the newspapers and television blabbed conjectures incessantly. It was eight-thirty when she pushed open the door to her kitchen. She could hear the TV in the family room. Her husband was in the gold wing chair as usual watching the fights. The loud gong rang to end the round. There was nothing she had to do now until his ten o'clock nightly routine of crackers and milk, four kippers and cheese with his tea.

"Is that you now?" he said, not really caring if it was or not. "Yes." She walked by him and up the stairs to their bedroom. She came to her daughter's room and opened the door and looked in. At five her daughter had announced that she was going to marry her daddy when she grew up. They had always been a pair. Her husband, ironically, had not wanted children, and when she was three months gone and her mother forced him to marry, he had done everything to abort the kid. First he tricked her into a fake doctor's appointment where a gypsy stuck her extra-long fingernails into her, and then gave

her some pills that made her so nauseous she refused to take them. Inevitability was now his lot in life.

He became a father. Thus the irony of the fierce attachment he formed to the growing child, ignoring his wife from early on, forcing her into a twin bed and a sexless marriage. Her husband had chosen the child for his love and she now was the hated intruder in the house, the servant. She had stayed on faithfully, despite her daughter's neglect, despite the painful situation, and, she had that punishing handicap in life, hope, the glue that keeps one stuck to the impossible thinking that one day "they will see how wrong they have been, and will repent their cruelty and beg her forgiveness." If she stuck it out, some day things would change. She lay down on her bed. She had slept alone for fourteen years now. Her husband had told her when she questioned him, "I cannot sleep with someone I don't love. The subject is closed." It was. Of course she loved her tiny house, scrubbing it clean and bright, purple irises in a crystal vase on the polished table in the sunlight with the curtains blowing in the cool summer air and Rachmaninoff's piano concerto playing, ah this ushered in a state of ecstasy. The next morning she remembered her secret. The memory rushed to her brain and through her veins with a delicious bite between pain and pleasure. She felt more alive than ever. Less than a mile away, swollen with water and wrapped in weeds, just under the surface, floating, swaying in a macabre dance, a young woman with long copper-colored hair, stared vacantly at nothing. This gave her something of her own that she could hug close to her heart, something exclusively hers. The next morning her husband came downstairs, ate his muesli with a cut-up banana and left for work without any words, as always. She washed the bowl, spoon, and glass, put things away and cleaned the kitchen until it sparkled in the morning sun. She called upstairs to her daughter. "It's eight-thirty. Are you up? What do you want for breakfast?"

There was no answer.

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Contributors This Issue...



Robert J.E. Simpson is the overworked and underpaid editor of *Diabolique* magazine. When not contributing to your favourite magazine he works as a film historian, writer, and broadcaster based in Belfast. He recently threw away a career in libraries for a stint as an independent publisher (www.avalardpublishing.com). His personal website is www.avalard.co.uk



David I. Rattigan is a British-Canadian freelance writer with interests ranging from religion, film, and language. His published writing includes *Leaving Fundamentalism* (Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008, ed. G. Elijah Dann), and articles for *Third Way* magazine and *The Guardian's Comment is Free* website. He shares his love of Hammer horror at DictionaryofHammer.com



Kevin G Shinnick is a professional actor who also publishes *SCARLET THE FILM MAGAZINE*. He appears in the films *THE DEATH OF POE*, *SCREAMING DEAD* and *SKIN CRAWL*. Kevin is currently executive director of www.tetcity.org



Kyle Kouri is a writer. He was born in Connecticut and spent his late teenage years in Los Angeles. He lives in New York. His work has appeared on thefastertimes.com, socialistic.com, slcspeaks.com, and in *Diabolique Magazine*. He writes essays on his blog. Check them out at culturejackl.tumblr.com. You can follow him @KyleKouri.



Sandy Robertson, an ex-rock/film journalist, has been interested in the curious byways of literature since childhood, especially in occultist Aleister Crowley and the writer Montague Summers, on whose unmarked grave he and colleague Edwin Pouncey erected a stone nearly 25 years ago.



David Del Valle is a journalist, columnist, film historian, and a radio & television commentator on the horror/science-fiction/cult & fantasy film genres. He has contributed to magazines internationally and has been interviewed by the BBC, A & E Network, Channel 4 (London) and The Sci-Fi Channel. He produced and hosted a series of television interviews entitled *Sinister*

Image. His guests ran the gamut from Cameron Mitchell to Russ Meyer. His book, *LOST HORIZONS*, takes you on a first person tour of the man-made Shangri La beneath the Hollywood sign, ultimately descending into the smog-shrouded netherworld of *Last Horizons*.



Rob Talbot is a regular contributor to 'Superblog' *'Italian Film Review'* and UK-based print horror film magazine *Scream*. He maintains his own blog, 'Mondo Euro', while finishing his first horror novel. Holding a first class degree in English Literature, he works by day, and often night too, as Events and Marketing Co-ordinator for a busy arts venue (with adjoining real ale pub) where he has also recently started hosting screenings of Eurocult films.



Joan Eyles Johnson, lives in Hollywood, and is an award-winning writer who teaches literature and creative writing at Mount St. Mary's College in Los Angeles; her plays have been produced off-Broadway and elsewhere; her stories and poems have appeared in literary journals, *Ambit*, *The Mediterranean Review* and in the anthology, *Scream When You Burn*.



Trevor Denham is a California-based illustrator specializing in pen and ink drawings. He received a BFA from Ringling College and his work has appeared in *Mad Monster* and *Monsterpalooza* magazines. He has created creatures, story boards, and graphic novels for *Glass Eye Pix*, *Wild Sky Studios*, and *House of Diggs*.

ICONS of **HORROR**

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Those of us that have found ourselves working in a solitary environment for hours on end (especially in the evening), or anyone who has lived alone, all know the feeling and discomfort that comes from a fear of being watched. Whether it is worse to be watched during our most intimate moments (making love, showering, toileting), or during the mundane activities of life (doing the dishes, weeding, walking) is open for debate, but once the idea is in your head there is no escaping it.

Anglo Amalgamated suggested that a 'Peeping Tom' was perhaps the most frightening thing in the world. Of course, Michael Powell's film rather pushed the idea of the gentle pervert to an extreme. It is one thing after all, to spy on your neighbour. Quite another to want to possess them completely.

The British quad for Peeping Tom

is a thing of chilling beauty. A dark blue background provides the shadows in which a face is obscured – that of 'le Voyeur' (as the French posters added). It is a face of little detail, some eyelashes, and wrinkles, but otherwise reduced to a solitary eye, staring. The eye itself is lit, a flesh-toned contrast to the blue shadow, in the clear outline of a keyhole. This is the voyeuristic eye of the unidentified peeping tom of the film's title, peering through the light offered by an interior. He is an outsider, in the dark, illuminated only by the activity of others.

The poster contrasts his coldness with the warmth of an unseen scene. Curiously the balance of the vertical keyhole (orange/yellow) and horizontal title (white) forms a rudimentary cross. To see a cross, one cannot but help to think of religious symbolism, and yet it also echoes the cross-hairs of the camera viewfinder.

Most brilliantly of all, the poster inverts the relationship between perpetrator and victim. The peeping tom is normally one who watches from the shadows, unnoticed, thrilled by the actions of others. And yet here, the audience is able to look through the keyhole onto the eyes of the 'pervert'. In fact, we become the voyeur – watching the watcher – for he is on display and yet we keep our anonymity among the masses who gaze on the image. Cinema-going is all about us watching the actions of others, and Peeping Tom enables us to take the role of Peeping Tom, getting our kicks through watching not only the actions of the title character, but also viewing the world through his distorted perspective – through the camera viewfinder.

by Robert J.E. Simpson

How you can become a part of *Diabolique* and Horror Unlimited Letters

The editor welcomes correspondence from readers of *Diabolique*. Submissions for the letters page should be emailed to robert@horrorunlimited.com with 'Letters' in the subject line. All emails will be considered for publication, and may be edited.

Subscribers can also leave feedback via the comments function on the website, and via the new HorrorUnlimited online forum (see www.horrorunlimited.com for details)

Submissions

Diabolique welcomes unsolicited submissions for publication in the magazine and website. *Diabolique* promises to push our understanding of horror, and is particularly concerned with Gothic film and literature. We will consider submissions that expand our understanding of any aspect of horror, or that deal with seemingly well-worn subjects in a new and interesting way.

In the first instance we recommend you contact the editor with an outline of your proposal, and where appropriate an example of your writing. Full draft submissions are also welcome, and we will promptly acknowledge receipt and advise you whether we wish to take it forward.

Essays should be submitted via email in a Word or Rich Text Format attachment document. Unless previously agreed, your submissions should not have been published elsewhere—either online

or in print. At the time of going to press (March 2011), *Diabolique* does not as a rule pay for articles. A submission to the magazine confirms your willingness to allow a 12 month exclusivity on any article from date of publication.

We at *Diabolique* take issues of plagiarism very seriously. By submitting you also confirm that the material is your own original work, and you indemnify *Diabolique* and Horror Unlimited, the editors and publishers from any loss or expense incurred in the event of legal action arising from any offence.

Whilst not an academic publication, *Diabolique* encourages scholarly practices and approaches to the genre, and as such all sources should be referenced using numbered endnotes. The editor believes in the principles of good historical research, not tabloid journalism! For fuller guidelines please examine the contents of this issue, or email the editor.

Feature articles should be around 3,000 words, though we will consider longer articles by prior arrangement. Shorter articles should be around 1500–2000 words. Reviews should be between 500 and 1000 words. Fiction submissions can be of any length, but submissions over 5000 words may need to be edited or serialised.

All submissions should be accompanied by a short paragraph about the author (see the magazine for examples), and a photograph should be supplied.

Diabolique reserves the right to edit any submission to suit the needs of the magazine, including issues of presentation, style, and space. As a rule the authors will be consulted on any matters of alteration or addition, but in the event of a dispute the decision of the editors is final.

Illustrations

Authors are asked to provide photographs and/or illustrations for their work—including appropriate captions and references—or suggest where they may be obtained. The editors reserve the right to adapt, edit or commission artwork they feel would suit the presentation. Illustrative material should ideally be at 300dpi and sent as jpg or TIFF files.

Other Media

We are keen to see contributors explore the subject of horror through any means possible. Feel free to submit work in other formats, including illustrations, photography, video and anything else that takes your fancy. Work that cannot be published in the hard-copy magazine will be considered for publication on the Horror Unlimited website.

Please send all submissions and enquiries to the editor (Robert Simpson) at robert@horrorunlimited.com, with 'submission' in the subject line.

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the devils

a film by ken russell

DENHAM
2011

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a black one-piece swimsuit with white lace trim, is posing in a swimming pool. She is leaning forward with her hands on the pool edge. The background shows a bright, sunny day with a blue sky and some foliage.

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